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GISLI IN SÆBOL.

THE STORY

OF

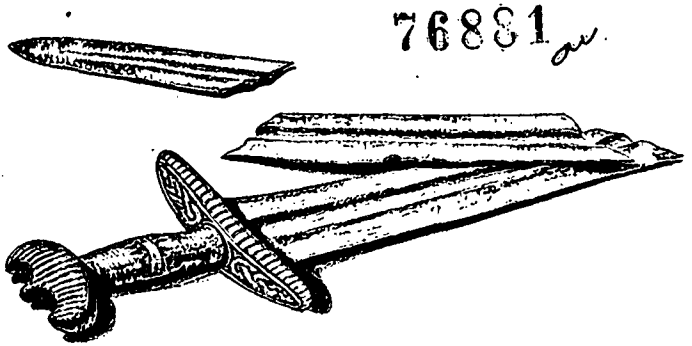
GISLI THE OUTLAW

From the Icelandic

BY

GEORGE WEBBE DASENT
D.C.L.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. E. ST. JOHN MILDMAY



Graysteel

EDINBURGH: EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS

1866

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NOTICE.

THIS English version of the Gisli Saga is formed out of a fusion of the two Icelandic texts which have come down to us; the elder text having been generally followed, and the younger used to supply deficiencies.

It is needless to speak of the story unless it can speak for itself in the English tongue. It is enough, therefore, to say that this is one of the finest, if it be not the very finest, of the lesser Sagas, among which it holds the same rank as Njala among those of greater length.

In one respect it is perhaps superior to any Saga. Gisli was a true poet, and his verses, though full of the periphrases and involutions common in that class of Icelandic composition, have genuine thought and feeling lying underneath them. It is hoped, if the English renderings run smoother than the Icelandic originals, the spirit which warms them may not be found utterly wanting. In this, as in other respects, Gisli must speak for himself.

But one thing may surely here be spoken of—the kind deeds

and help of friends. To the skilful hand that drew the illustrations which adorn this volume the Translator and the reader owe special thanks. It is seldom that the spirit of a story has been so fully grasped, and details of scenery and costume so thoroughly mastered.

To his friend Guðbrandr Vigfússon, an Icelander of profound knowledge in the language and literature of his country, the Translator's thanks for many valuable explanations and suggestions are most justly due and most heartily given.

The sword on the title-page has been most daintily drawn from an original, just such as "Graysteel" must have been, by the accomplished pencil of Mr. Drummond. To him, too, a meed of praise is due.

December 15, 1865.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE events described in the Saga of Gisli the Soursop reach from the end of Harold Fairhair's reign to the middle of the reign of Earl Hacon the Bad, or from about the year 930 to 980. Nothing can be livelier or more truthful than the account contained in it of Norwegian and Icelandic life and manners during those fifty years. In Norway itself, about the beginning of that period, Harold Fairhair, now grown old, had shared the kingdom which he had won with so much toil and blood among his sons, to be ruled over by Eric Bloody-axe as overking. Eric's incapacity and his wife Gunnhillda's cruelty soon lost what his politic father had won. He was forced to fly the land, and was succeeded by Hacon, another son of Harold Fairhair, who was called Hacon Athelstane's Fosterchild, because he had been sent by his father to be fostered by that famous English king. Of this prince, whose memory was held very dear by his people as Hacon the Good, the Saga of Gisli Soursop contains a sketch which, as a mere interpolation, has been banished from the body of the text, but which well deserves to stand here:—"As soon as

he heard of his father's death Hacon came west from England and went straight north to Drontheim, where he sought out first Sigurd the jarl of Hladir, and promised to give him up the jarldom which his father had held if he would back his claim as king. 'Methinks,' he said, 'that would be a good bargain if thou put me forward as king, and I gave thee such honour as thy father held before thee. Then thou wouldst be free and not fettered, as all now are in this land.' It had been one of the imposts of Harold Fairhair that he claimed as his own all the soil in Norway, both tilled and untilled, and the sea and lakes as well. Every man was to be his tenant and vassal. Now the jarl thinks over the matter; and it seemed to him that Hacon spoke fair, and so they struck a fast friendship. Then the jarl calls together a Thing of the three districts round Drontheim; and as soon as the Thing was set, up rises Hacon and spoke thus :—'It is well known to all men who have now come hither how Harold Fairhair laid all Norway under his feet—all the way north from Finmark down to the Gotha-Elf. He was, in truth, absolute king over all men. He had, too, as ye well know, a host of sons, most of them proper men; but he loved them very unevenly. Some he sent away to other lands, but some he kept with him about his court; and of all of them it was Eric Bloody-axe whom he weened would rule first and foremost of all his sons. So all obeyed him well in that matter as long

as he lived; but now my kinsman Eric has wrought very many things which are beyond bearing. And so I will ask this boon of all ye good men of Drontheim, that ye shall try to stay and strengthen him who will be more forbearing to the people, and who will rather let his kinsmen and the folk lift their heads a little, than him who strives to pull the people down. As for me, I wish to make it known that I will give up their freeholds to all those men who will cling to me and call me king.'.

"Then many men spoke to one another, and said:

"'Well, now, this is a strange thing! Here Harold Fairhair has come back, and has grown young again a second time; but he was old and gray when we last saw him. What can it all mean? Can he have any son so like him that we cannot tell the one from the other, save that one is young and the other old, and that this man gives us back with goodwill our freeholds and heritages which his sire took from us with overbearing might?'

"Then all the crowd shouted, and said they would have that man for their king who was likest to King Harold and showed most goodwill to the people; but as for Eric they would never have him to rule over them—a man who thrust out his own kith and kin into holes and corners. No; they would never have him, nor Gunnhillda, nor any of her sons. So the end of that Thing was, that Hacon was chosen to be king; but as fast as these tidings spread from district to district, what amends the

men of Drontheim had got for their wrongs, then all men sent word to King Hacon and offered to do him suit and service. But about the same time that he became king in Norway Thorbjorn the Soursop and his sons were the leading men in Surnadale."

Such was the state of things in Norway when Hacon the Good was chosen king in the year 935. Tribe after tribe, and district after district, took him as their king as soon as ever he gave back to the freeman that right of freehold, that primeval allodial claim to the soil, which marks the freeborn man of the Scandinavian stock. His father had claimed a right in the soil from every man, and had levied a poll-tax as a quit-rent, but the son was unable to hold what the father had grasped; and though Hacon was king of Norway, the freeman remained his own lord and master over his own land so long as he paid the king his customary service. This is not the place to enter at length into the relations which existed in the tenth century between the king and the freemen in Norway. It is enough to say, that where the king's arm reached he was powerful, where it fell short he was weak. At no time, even under the grinding system of Harold Fairhair, was the weight of the monarch evenly felt all over the land at once. When he was south-east in the Cattegat, the freemen of Drontheim and Helgeland snapped their fingers for a while at his authority; and, in like manner,

when he went north the dwellers round "the Bay" did pretty much as they chose. All over the country the rude law of arms, the sacred right of wager of battle, in which the gods were thought to smile on manly worth, was regarded as something binding on all; and thus it is that in this Saga of Gisli a challenge to fight on the island for wife and land was looked on as a call which no man could neglect without the loss of all respect. Thus it was the Bearsarks, men of great bodily strength and well skilled in the use of weapons, roamed over the country, like Bjorn the Black, and thrust weaker men out of their homestead by brute force.

So, too, it was when gallants like Kolbein came day after day to a freeman's house, sat for hours with his daughter, and yet never asked for her hand,* that the vengeance of the family fell on the wrongdoer's head; as when Gisli, after warning Kolbein again and again, dealt him that one blow which was "more than enough."

Thus it was, again, that Kolbein's kith and kin could fall on Thorbjorn's house at Stock, burn it to the ground, and go their way, deeming that they had rooted out the whole household, root and branch. So it was that Gisli and his brother could burn Bard the traitor, kill the king's tax-gatherers, sell

* This was called "*at gleyja*" or "*at fífla*," to beguile or befool a woman.

house and land, and sail for Iceland with all their goods and a great following. In Norway, in those days, the king was weak and the freeman strong save when he was in the royal grasp; and the rule was, that every man did what was right in his own eyes.

In Iceland the settlers found another state of things. About the year 950, when Thorbjorn the Soursop left Norway, Iceland was already shared among the heads of an aristocracy of chiefs, the offspring of the first settlers, who ruled in each valley as priests. Such men were Thorgrim, the priest of Frey, and Bork, his brother, grandsons of the old Thorolf Mostrarskegg, who had settled on Thorsness, on the east side of Broadfirth, and there established a Thing of such sacredness, and hallowed by such senseless rules, as to entail on his children a long succession of bloodshed in the vain struggle to render them binding. It is no little proof of the power of this great family that Thorgrim could leave his priesthood at Helgafell in Broadfirth in the hands of his brother Bork, and go west to wed Thordisa in Hawkdale, and yet gather followers enough in that strange country to set up a priesthood and take a haughty lead in the Valsere Thing. No doubt the support of such champions as Gisli, Thorkel, and Vestein stood him in good stead; but he, the grandchild of the mighty Thorolf, is the chief figure in that gallant group, and so long as he stood straight he was a great stay to Gisli and his brother.

At that time the Althing was already established; we hear of it about twenty years before the Soursops went to Iceland; but that venerable assembly, which plays so great a part in the history of the island half a century later, was then struggling in its infancy, and very weighty matters, which, half a century later, in the days of Njal or Snorro the Priest, would have been carried to the Althing, were settled summarily at the District Things, and never came before the Althing at all. At these District Things the chiefs who lived near them were all-powerful. The Quarter Things, which were a great remedy against injustice, were not yet established. So it is that we may explain the ease with which Bork had Gisli outlawed at the Thorsness Thing. He summoned his enemy to come to his very door to plead his cause; and we can readily understand why all the efforts of men so young and inexperienced as Bjartmar's sons failed to throw any hindrance to the sentence which made their brave kinsman an outlaw. That such a sentence could be passed against such a darling as Gisli tells much both for Bork's influence and the respect felt for law, when a decision was once given.

But besides all this load of influence and law which weighed Gisli down, there was another burden which he found it heavier to bear. He was doomed already, even before his birth. He and his were under a curse. They kept the broken bits of "Gray-

steel," the thrall's good sword, but along with them went his withering spaedom, uttered as he drove his axe into the first Gisli's brain—"This is but the beginning of the ill-luck which it will bring on thy kith and kin." The deepest trait in the character of Gisli, the helpful, faithful man, is the background of brooding melancholy against which his noble nature stands. He tries to render Gest's words harmless by the solemn oath of foster-brothers, but it is of no avail. What must be, must be. He is not angry with Auda for gossipping with Asgerda, "because when things are once fated, some one must utter the words that seem to bring them about." He does everything that man can do to keep Vestein afar off, but Vestein rushes on his doom in spite of every warning. "Fate rules in this too." There is no help for it. After his outlawry he warns his brother that ill-luck was following him too—that he would be the first to feel the thrall's curse—but Thorkel laughs him to scorn. As for himself, for fourteen years his evil destiny pursues him even in his dreams. He roams over the land seeking shelter and support, but with the best will no one is able to give him any help. Something always stands in the way. No wonder that while all thought there never had been a man of readier hand or more daring heart than Gisli, all felt at the same time that "he was not a lucky man, as was proved from the very first."

This feeling alone, quite apart from any of Thorgrim's spells,

was quite enough to account for Gisli's misfortunes. Then, as now, a man's fate was in his own hands, and men are ever willing to believe of another the misfortune which he is the first to spread of himself. The wizard's wicked art, indeed, was not without its power in that early state of society. It bore its victims down because they put faith in it; and like the Obimen of Africa, the worker of spells was very powerful in the tenth century. But that power was as nothing compared with that dead weight of destiny which marked whole families for ruin for causes quite out of their control, but which were not the less real though the doomed had no hand in them.

It remains to point out some things for the knowledge of which we are indebted to this Saga alone. When it is said that the first Gisli married his brother's wife "because he would not let a good woman go out of the family," we might think that step the result of a mere natural liking or material convenience, did we not find further on in the Saga another passage which stamps these marriages as a common custom. When Thorgrim the Priest is slain Þork takes his brother's widow to wife as a matter of course. "In those days wives were heritage like other things." Here we have the veil lifted for a moment, and we catch a glimpse at that early state of society which underlies and is before all law, when wives and children are mere matters of property taken by a man's heirs, just as they would

inherit his cattle and sheep. It is not of course meant by this that the state of Icelandic society was such in the tenth century, but the custom of inheriting a wife on such conditions must be looked on as a common custom, though not perhaps as an universal rule.

In no other Saga do we find the rites of burial in a "howe" or barrow so well described. Thorgrim the Priest is laid in his boat or ship, and then the howe or cairn is heaped over him. Vestein, the daring sailor, we may be sure, was buried in his ship too; both had the hellshoes fitted to their feet, on which in heathen times the dead were fancied to walk to Valhalla,* and both had their ships steadied and kept upright in the howe by great stones. Though Thorgrim only mentions the hellshoon when he binds them on Vestein, and Gisli the stone when Thorgrim's

* The second and later text of the Saga makes no mention of Valhalla. That happy home of Woden's champions had been forgotten, and so, too, had the belief in Hell, as the goddess to whose lot the vile and cowardly belonged. The divinity who ruled over the place of torment had sunk in the place of torment itself. Thus it happens that the later text adds this curious bit: "For it was said in those days that men went to hell when they were dead; and that is why a man is still said to busk him for hell who puts on many clothes, or is long in dressing himself when he goes out;" a passage which shows the care which was bestowed even in later days on laying the dead out for burial, and which may also explain the frequency with which the name of the old goddess is taken in vain by swearers in modern times.

ship is steadied, it is certain that the burial rites were alike in both cases—that Vestein's ship was steadied like Thorgrim's, and that the hellshoon were bound on Thorgrim's feet, just as he had bound them on Vestein. But both these customs are remembered alone in our Saga.

The case is the same with the games of ball on the ice. They are more exactly described in Gisli's Saga than anywhere else. Here we have the gathering of the players from the whole countryside on the frozen tarn, the crowd of beholders whose praise spurs on each player to do his best, the women clustered on the howe which overhangs the scene of strife, the choosing sides, the struggles between the foremost players, the big ball, the striking it with the bat, the hurling it with the hand, the heavy falls on the smooth ice, and the quarrels which arise when the blood grows hot. Were it not that the bat or stick is always mentioned, one might fancy that the Icelandic game of ball in the tenth century was our game of football. As it is, we must imagine it something between hockey and football—that the ball was sometimes struck with the bat, and sometimes caught and kicked, or thrown with the hand. Certain it is that both "shinning" and "hacking" were allowed by the rules of the game to almost any extent.

Of the heathen worship, and of Christianity, then slowly feeling its way towards the North, we have some very interesting

particulars. When Thorgrim's career is over, and he lies in his howe, it is a beautiful trait that the god whom he had faithfully worshipped—Frey, the sun-god of the North—should look down with his bright beams on his servant's grave, and so warm it through the winter that no snow could fasten on it, or, as the Saga well expresses it, "that the frost should not come between them." This seemed something new and strange—so strange, that Gisli, in an evil hour, as his eye fell on the green grave of the man who had slain his brother-in-law, and on whom he had taken due vengeance, as in duty bound, could not forbear from breaking out into that dark song of triumph which Thordisa's quick ears caught and understood, to her brother's speedy ruin.

But another trait we find which reveals in few words a deed of one of the early settlers so revolting and accursed as to be almost beyond belief. Of Hallsteinsness, on the western shore of Broadfirth, not far from Thorskafirth, we are told: "They landed just beyond the farm where Hallstein offered up his son, that a tree of ninety feet might be thrown up by the sea, and there are still to be seen the pillars of his high seat which he had made out of that tree." Drift-timber of that length was scarce in Iceland, and so Hallstein could find it in his heart to offer up his son for such a prize. Such offerings then were not more unknown in the West than in the East, and here again we see that rude power of the father over his children, his right to do as he

would with his own, even though his own were his flesh and blood. This Hallstein was no ignoble man. He was the eldest son of Thorolf Mostrarskegg, the grandfather of Thorgrim the Priest. He had left Norway and gone to the Hebrides before his father made up his mind to settle in Iceland. But in the Hebrides he could find no rest. Many of the Northmen settled there had already been converted to Christianity, and especially Helgi the Lean and Auda the Wealthy, his friends. So he and Bjorn, Helgi's brother, sailed for Iceland two years after Thorolf had reached it. When they met Thorolf, Bjorn was not beneath asking him for a share of his land, and there he settled at Bjornshaven, side by side with Thorolf; but Hallstein was too proud to ask his father for land, so he went west across Broadfirth, and took waste land for himself at Hallsteinsness, and then and there it was that, something after the manner of Jephthah, he made his vow and offered up his son when the god of the sea threw up on the strand the mighty tree. It should be remembered, however, that Hallstein was unshaken in his heathendom, and that the victims offered in this way were fancied to be welcome to Woden, and at once bidden to all the joys of Valhalla.

The notices which we find of Christianity are curious. "At that time"—that is in 960, when Gisli and Vestein were at Viborg in Denmark—"Christianity had come into Denmark,

and Gisli and his companions were marked with the cross, for that was much the wont in those days of all who went on trading voyages; for so they entered into full fellowship with Christian men." So that commerce was as instrumental in spreading Christianity in the tenth century as in the nineteenth. The Christians of England and the West would not deal at all with heathens, or felt easier in dealing with those who had at least received the first initiation into Christianity, the *primsigning*, or marking with the cross—a sort of *baptism*, as distinct from *christening*; and Gisli and Vestein, who were not such stubborn heathens as Hallstein or Thorgrim, allowed themselves to be so marked for the sake of doing a good trade. That Gisli had even gone a little beyond this is shown by the passage in which we are told he "had left off all heathen sacrifices since he had been in Viborg." Here, again, it is "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little." Thus, like a little leaven, did Christianity work in the North till it had leavened the whole mass.* Of Gisli himself it may be said that the verses in which he recites his dreams represent the struggle which was passing in his mind between the old religion and the new. His two dream-wives

* This custom among heathens, of being marked with the cross on entering into relations with Christians, was very common. In the Egil's Saga we are told that Egil and his brother Thorolf underwent the rite on entering into the service of King Athelstane in London.

are but personifications—the one of the mild and forgiving spirit of Christianity, the other of the bloody and relentless superstition of the North. Valkyrie and Guardian Angel, as it were, fight for the body of the great champion while he is alive, and for his soul after his death. His last verses would seem to show that he died trusting in nothing but his own daring and hardihood.*

Very curious is the passage about the change of name of Thorgrim's and Thordisa's posthumous son. At first he was called Thorgrim after his father, but from his snappish, snarling temper he was called "Snerrir" the Snarler, and afterwards Snorro.† But to this snappish child, afterwards well known in Icelandic story as Snorro the Priest, we owe the preservation and perhaps the existence of Gisli's Saga. The fame of that

* The word "lœmingi" in the verses on p. 106 has puzzled critics; and some have thought the word meant no bird at all, but the Norwegian "Lemming," a kind of rat which Gisli must have seen in Norway, but which is not found in Iceland. In this version it has been rendered "night-hawk," as more poetical; but there is little doubt that it really means the "Loom," or Great Arctic Diver, whose shrieking, heard in these vast solitudes at night, is most weird and doleful.

† There is a very curious extract from the Hauksbok in G. Vigfússon's edition of the Eyrbyggja, p. 126, to the effect that in the olden time it was a common custom to join the name of one of the gods to a child's first name. Thus Grimr would become Thorgrimr—Steinn, Thorsteinn—Oddr, Thoroddr—and the same with other gods, though it was more common to compound them with Thor; "so that," says the old writer, "most men had two names in one, and they thought it likeliest to lead to long life

great Icelander made every event in his life a matter of public interest, and the memory of the uncle was embalmed in the history of the nephew. Every one knew the tragic circumstances that attended the birth of Snorro, as well as the fourteen weary years during which his uncle was an outlaw, while the snarling boy was growing up under Bork's roof. At last, when Snorro is hardly fifteen, Gisli falls by Eyjolf's hands, and the news is brought to Helgafell. The year after, Snorro, who up to that time, like another Brutus, had been despised by the stupid Bork, claimed his own from his uncle, made him give up Helgafell, and began a career of almost uninterrupted success. That was in the year 980. In the year 1031 he died, sixty-seven years and a half old, having been born in October 963.*

and good luck to have double names; for, even though any one cursed them by the gods under one name, still they thought no harm would come of it if they had another name besides." With which we may compare what is said in the story of Thorstein the White (p. 46)—"It was the belief of men that these men would live longer who had two names." Nowadays, if some of us had a fresh life for each of our names we should be very long-lived.

* The Eyrbyggja Saga, one of the most trustworthy of the Icelandic Sagas, corroborates the accounts of the Gisli Saga. Of Thorgrim the Priest it says: "Thorgrim took him a wife west in Dyrafirth. He got Thordisa, the daughter of the Soursop, and he went west to set up his abode with his brothers-in-law, Gisli and Thorkel. Thorgrim slew Vestein, Vestein's son, at an autumn feast in Hawkdale. But the autumn after, when Thorgrim was twenty-five years old, his brother-in-law Gisli slew

In one or two points our Saga is inaccurate, owing probably to the fact that it was written in the south of Iceland from information given to Ari the Learned by Snorro's daughter, Thurida the Wise, who died in 1112, eighty-eight years old. Thus, when it speaks of Thorgrim the Priest having a son old enough in 961 to send to deal with the Easterlings about his planks, this must be a mistake; for Thorgrim was only twenty-five, as we know from the Eyrbyggja Saga, when he died in 964. The Thorodd mentioned on that occasion must have been Thorgrim's nephew or younger brother.

So, too, the Saga is wrong in making Ingialld the tenant of Bork. We know from Landnama that Hergilsisle was Ingialld's own property, and that Bork, as a priest, took it from him because he harboured a man outlawed at the Thorsness Thing, which had jurisdiction over Hergilsisle.* "Ingialld was their son—that is, the son of Hergil and Thoruna—and he dwelt in Hergilsisle, and helped Gisli the Soursop. For that Bork the Stout made him forfeit the island, but he bought the farm Hlid in Thorskafirth." Instead of being a tenant, he was the son of a

him at the autumn feast at Sæbol. *Some nights after*, Thordisa his wife bore a son, and that boy was called Thorgrim, after his father." According to the Eyrbyggja, therefore, the tragical event would seem to have hastened Snorro's birth, and he was not only posthumous, but born before his time. According to our Saga, the event was not hurried, but Bork married Thordisa as his brother's heir before the birth of his nephew.

* Landnama, ii. 19. Gullthoris S. ch. 9.

Landnam's man, or original settler, and lived on the island which his father had taken for himself. His courage in sheltering Gisli lost him his land by legal process, which Bork, as priest at Thorsness Thing, brought against him in that capacity.

Graysteel, the spear-head scored with runes made out of the thrall's good sword, did not pass away with Gisli or his time. Two hundred and fifty years after, it was a well-known weapon. In the year 1221 the Sturlunga speaks of it as follows at the battle of Breidabolstad in the south of Iceland: "Then Gunnlaug rushed forward and thrust at Bjorn Thorvalddson of Breidabolstad with the spear which they called 'Graysteel,' and said Gisli the Soursop had owned. The thrust fell on his throat, and he, Bjorn, then turned back to the church and sat him down there. Gunnlaug went to Lopt, and tells him that Bjorn was wounded. Lopt asks who dealt the wound. 'I and Graysteel,' says Gunnlaug. 'How deep was the wound?' asks Lopt. Then Gunnlaug showed him the spear, and the barb of the spear high up was smeared with fat. Then they were sure that wound would be a death-wound."

Again, in some verses on the same battle, in which the poetry of Snorro Sturluson is roughly handled:

> "I heard that Bjorn from whetted steel—
> O happy deed!—had taën a thrust;
> The closefist, turning on his heel,
> Hard kissed by Graysteel, bit the dust."*

* Sturlunga, iv. 26.

Again, twenty-five years later, in 1238, at the battle of Orlygstad, so disastrous to the Sturlungs, Graysteel was in the hands of Sturla Sighvatson. "Sturla defended himself with the spear, hight Graysteel, deftly and well. It was a great spear of the olden time, scored with runes [*mála spiot*], but not well tempered. He thrust so hard with it that men fell fast before him. But the spear-head bent, and he put his foot upon it oftimes to straighten it."*

The author of the Sturlunga was present at this battle, and speaks of the spear as an eye-witness. The bad luck predicted by the thrall followed Graysteel to the last. In a few moments after he had so gallantly wielded the fatal weapon, Sturla, the descendant of Thordisa the Soursop, was taken prisoner and massacred by his bitter foes.

At that time Graysteel, forged in 963, would have been 275 years old—a good old age for a weapon. Length of days, and often cleaning and sharpening, may have been the cause why the spear-head of Thorgrim the Priest should have so bent under Sturla's strong arm as to need straightening over and over again under his foot. But in those days it was no uncommon thing for a good weapon to be treasured up for centuries. In the will of Athelstane the Atheling, the brother of Edmund Ironside, who died young in the days of Ethelred the Unready,

* Sturlunga, vi. 17.

we have a most curious list of weapons owned by that prince—swords of all sorts—which he bequeathed to his kinsmen and followers: "The sword with the notch in the blade [*ðes sceardan swurdes*]"—"the sword with the 'pitted' or fretted hilt,"—"the sword which King Offa owned," which must have been then two hundred years old, and which he leaves to his brother Edmund Ironside; and, though last, not least, a "mal" sword [*mál swurd*], which has been ignorantly rendered "the sword with a cross on it," but which is nothing more than own brother to our "mála" spear—that is, a sword with runic figures or characters scored on it, whose mystical meaning was thought to impart a peculiar virtue to the weapon.

Lastly, we have only to call the reader's attention to the boldness with which the characters are drawn. From the least to the greatest—from Ingibjorga, "who did not love her first husband so well that she would not rather have been married to his brother," to Gisli, the man of thought and work, who toiled day and night, whose poetry was the best of its kind, and whose arm was no weaker when he struck his last blow than when he began the fight—all have a sharpness and clearness of their own. Thorkel, the lazy dandy, who thinks more of dress than work, who lets Gisli do all the labour about the farm, while he sleeps or listens to women's gossip, is ever true to himself. He is lazy to the last; and had he known how to work, would not have

fallen as he did. But while Bork—the stupid, heavy Bork—is busy setting up their booth, Thorkel sits idly on the seashore, with his fine clothes and good sword, till vengeance overtakes him at the hand of a mere boy. Indeed, they are all the same. Vestein, the bold sailor, who will not turn back because he has already passed the watershed; Ingialld, the busy man, who rowed out to fish every day that a boat would swim—the bold heart who stood by Gisli to the last; the crafty Ref and his shrewish wife; the sharp-eyed, hare-footed and hare-hearted Spy-Helgi; the wary, backward Eyjolf; the tender, faithful Auda; the fat, stupid Bork;—all are masterpieces in their way. True for all time, and coming home to every noble heart, they are realities which have lived for nine hundred years, and which can never pass away so long as human nature remains the same.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE SAGA.

930. Harold Fairhair shares Norway among his sons.

933. Hacon Athelstane's foster-child begins to reign.

934? Gisli born.

950. Gisli, quite young, kills Kolbein.

951. Thorbjorn's house at Stock burnèd.

952. Thorbjorn and his sons sail for Iceland.

955? Thorbjorn Soursop dies.

958? Gisli and Thorkel marry.

960. Thorgrim the Priest marries Thordisa, Gisli's sister.

961. Thorgrim, Vestein, and the Soursops go abroad.

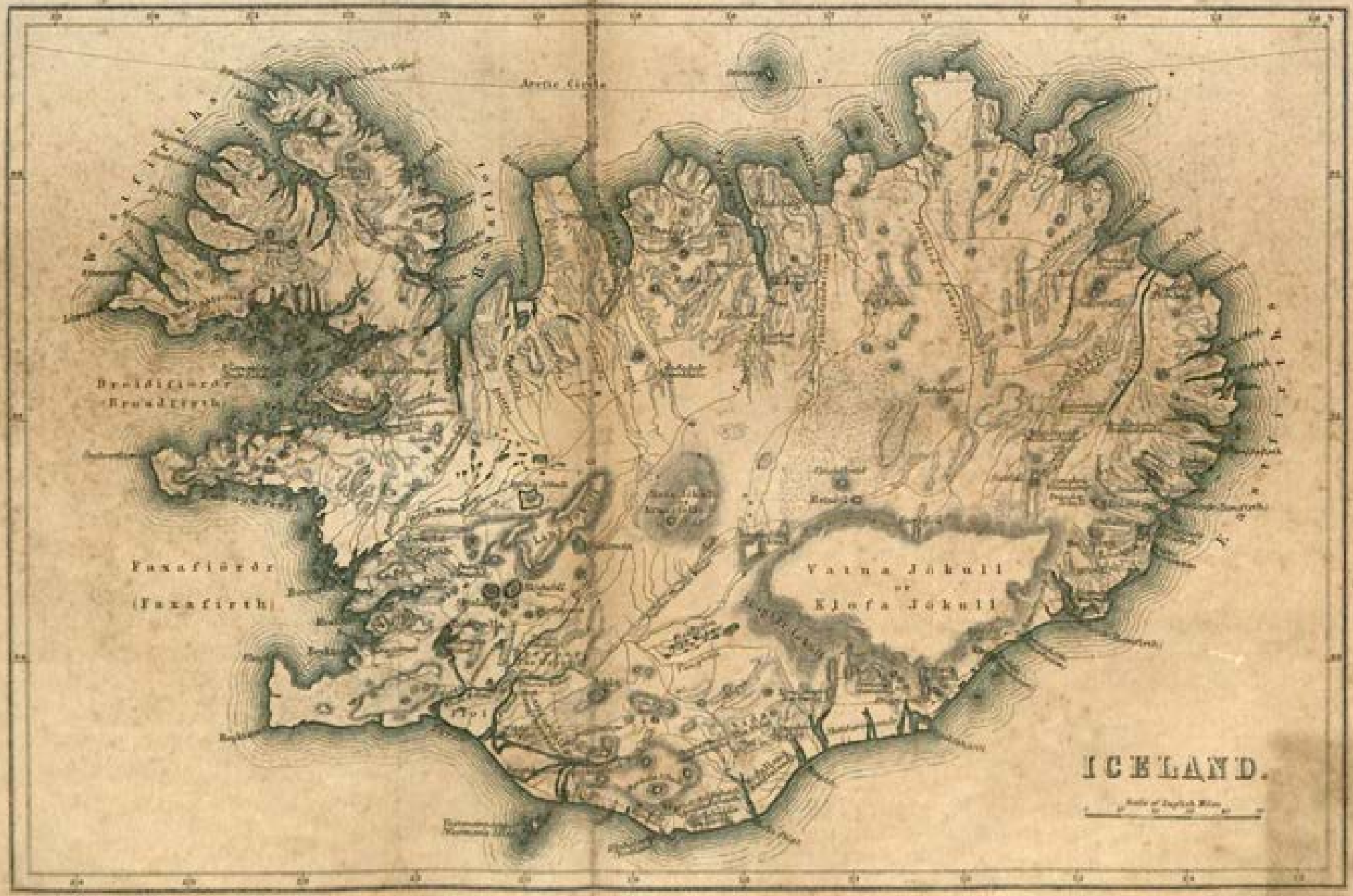
963. (Oct. 7th to 17th) Thorgrim slain, and birth of Snorro the Priest.

964. Outlawry of Gisli.

972? Thorkel slain.

978. Gisli slain, after having been an outlaw fourteen years and a half.

1031. Death of Snorro the Priest.



LONGMAN & DOUGLAS, EDINBURGH.

GISLI THE OUTLAW.

CHAPTER I.

THE THRALL'S CURSE.

At the end of the days of Harold Fairhair there was a mighty lord in Norway whose name was Thorkel Goldhelm, and he dwelt in Surnadale in North Mæren. He had a wedded wife, and three sons by her. The name of the eldest was Ari, the second was called Gisli, and the third Thorbjorn. They were all young men of promise. There was a man too, named Isi, who ruled over the Fjardarfolk. His daughter's name was Ingibjorga, and she was the fairest of women. Ari, Thorkel's son, asked her to wife, and she was wedded to him. He got a great dower with her, and amongst the rest that she brought with her from her home was a man named Kol: he was of high degree, but he had been taken captive in war, and was called a Thrall. So he came with Ingibjorga to Surnadale. Thorkel gave over to his son Ari a rich farm up in the dale, and there he set up his abode, and was looked on as a most rising man.

But now our story goes on to tell of a man named Bjorn, nicknamed Bjorn the Black. He was a Bearsark, and much given to duels. Twelve men went at his heel, and besides he

was skilled in the black art, and no steel could touch his skin. No wonder he was unbeloved by the people, for he turned aside as he listed into the houses of men, and took away their wives and daughters, and kept them with him as long as he liked. All raised an outcry when he came, and all were fain when he went away. Well, as soon as this Bjorn heard that Ari had brought home a fair wife with a rich dower, he thought he would have a finger in that pie. So he turned his steps thither with his crew, and reached the house at eventide. As soon as Ari and Bjorn met, Bjorn told him that he wanted to play the master in that house, and that Ingibjorga, the housewife, should be at his beck and call whenever he chose. As for Ari, he said he might please himself, go away or stay, so he let Bjorn have his will. But Ari said he would not go away, nor would he let him play the master there.

"Very well!" says Bjorn, "thou shalt have another choice. I will challenge thee to fight on the island, if thou darest, three days from this, and then we will try whose Ingibjorga shall be; and he, too, shall take all the other's goods who wins the day. Now, mind, I will neither ransom myself with money, nor will I suffer any one else to ransom himself. One shall conquer and the other die."

Ari said he was willing enough to fight; so the Bearsarks went their way and busked them to battle. To make a long story short, they met on the island, and the end of their struggle was, that Ari fell; but the Bearsark was not wounded, for no steel would touch him.

Now Bjorn thought he had won wife, and land, and goods, and he gave out that he meant to go at even to Ari's house to claim his own. Then Gisli, Ari's brother, answered and said: "It will soon be all over with me and mine if this disgrace comes to pass, that this ruffian tramples us under foot. But this shall never be, for I will challenge thee at once to battle to-morrow morning. I would far rather fall on the island than bear this shame."

"Well and good," says Bjorn; "thou and thy kith and kin shall all fall one after the other, if ye dare to fight with me."

After that they parted, and Gisli went home to the house that Ari had owned. Now the tidings were told of what had happened on the island, and of Ari's death, and all thought that a great blow to the house. But Gisli goes to Ingibjorga, and tells her of Ari's fall, and how he had challenged Bjorn to the island, and how they were to fight the very next morning.

"That is a bootless undertaking," said Ingibjorga, "and I fear it will not turn out well for thee, unless thou hast other help to lean on."

"Ah!" said Gisli, "then I beg that thou and all else who are likeliest to yield help will do their best that victory may seem more hopeful than it now looks."

"Know this," says Ingibjorga, "that I was not so very fond of Ari that I would not rather have had thee. There is a man," she said, "who, methinks, is likeliest to be able to help in this matter, so that it may be well with thee."

"Who is that?" asks Gisli.

"It is Kol, my foster-father," was the answer; "for I ween he has a sword that is said to be better than most others, though he seems to set little store by it, for he calls it his 'Chopper;' but whoever wields that sword wins the day."

So they sent for Kol, and he came to meet Gisli and Ingibjorga.

"Hast thou ever a good sword?" asked Gisli.

"My sword is no great treasure," answers Kol; "but yet there are many things in the churl's cot which are not in the king's grange."

"Wilt thou not lend me the sword for my duel with Bjorn?" said Gisli.

"Ah!" said Kol, "then will happen what ever happens with those things that are treasures—you will never wish to give it up. But for all that, I tell thee now that this sword will bite whatever its blow falls on, be it iron or aught else; nor can its edge be deadened by spells, for it was forged by the Dwarves, and its name is 'Graysteel.' And now make up thy mind that I shall take it very ill if I do not get the sword back when I claim it."

"It were most unfair," says Gisli, "that thou shouldst not get back the sword after I have had the use of it in my need."

Now Gisli takes the sword, and the night glides away. Next morn, ere they went from home to the duel, Thorbjorn called out to Gisli his brother, and said: "Which of us twain now shall fight with the Bearsark to-day, and which of us shall slaughter the calf?"

"My counsel," said Gisli, "is, that thou shalt slaughter the calf while I and Bjorn try our strength." He did not choose the easiest task.

So they set off to the island, and Gisli and Bjorn stood face to face on it. Then Gisli bade Bjorn strike the first blow. "No one has ever made me that offer before," said Bjorn; "indeed no one has ever challenged me before this day save thou." So Bjorn made a blow at Gisli, but Gisli threw his shield before him, and the sword hewed off from the shield all that it smote from below the handle. Then Gisli smote at Bjorn in his turn, and the stroke fell on the tail of the shield and shore it right off, and then passed on and struck off his leg below the knee. One other stroke he dealt him and took off his head. Then he and his men turned on Bjorn's followers, and some are slain and some chased away into the woods.

After that Gisli goes home and got good fame for this feat, and then he took the farm as his heritage after Ari his brother; and he got Ingibjorga also to wife, for he would not let a good woman go out of the family. And time rolls on, but he did not give up the good sword, nor had Kol ever asked for it.

One day they two met out of doors, and Gisli had "Gray-steel" in his hand, and Kol had an axe. Kol asked whether he thought the sword had stood him in good stead, and Gisli was full of its praises. "Well now," said Kol, "I should like to have it back if thou thinkest it has done thee good service in thy need."

"Wilt thou sell it?" says Gisli.

"No," says Kol.

"I will give thee thy freedom and goods, so that thou mayest fare whither thou wilt with other men."

"I will not sell it," says Kol.

"Then I will give thee thy freedom, and lease or give thee land, and besides I will give thee sheep and cattle and goods as much as thou needest."

"I will not sell it a whit more for that," says Kol.

"Indeed," says Gisli, "thou art too wilful to cling to it thus. Put thine own price on it—any sum thou choosest in money—and be sure I will not stand at trifles if thou wilt come to terms in some way. Besides, I will give thee thy freedom and a becoming match if thou hast any liking for any one."

"There is no use talking about it," says Kol; "I will not sell it whatsoever thou offerest. But now it just comes to what I feared at first, when I said it was not sure whether thou wouldest be ready to give the sword up if thou knewest what virtue was in it."

"And I too," says Gisli, "will say what will happen. Good will befall neither of us, for I have not the heart to give up the sword, and it shall never come into any other man's hand than mine if I may have my will."

Then Kol lifts up his axe, while Gisli brandished "Gray-steel," and each smote at the other. Kol's blow fell on Gisli's head, so that it sank into the brain, but the sword fell on Kol's head, and did not bite; but still the blow was so stoutly dealt

that the skull was shattered and the sword broke asunder. Then Kol said:

"It had been better now that I had got back my sword when I asked for it; and yet this is but the beginning of the ill-luck which it will bring on thy kith and kin." Thus both of them lost their lives.

CHAPTER II.

KOLBEIN'S KILLING.

Now after that Ingibjorga longed to get away from Surnadale, and went home to her father with her goods. As for Thorbjorn, he looked about for a wife, and went east across the Keel to Fressey, and wooed a woman named Isgerda, and got her. After that he went back home to Surnadale and set up housekeeping with his father. Thorkel Goldhelm lived but a little while afterwards ere he fell sick and died, and Thorbjorn took all the heritage after his father. He was afterwards called Thorbjorn Soursop, and he dwelt at Stock in Surnadale. He and Isgerda had children. Their eldest son was Thorkel, the second Gisli, and the third Ari, but he was sent at once to be fostered at Fressey, and he is little heard of in this story. Their daughter's name was Thordisa. She was their eldest child. Thorkel was a tall man and fair of face, of huge strength, and the greatest dandy. Gisli was swarthy of hue, and as tall as the tallest: 'twas hard to tell how strong he was. He was a man who could turn his hand to anything, and was ever at work—mild of temper too. Their sister Thordisa was a fair woman to look on, high-minded, and rather hard of heart. She was a dashing, forward woman.

At that time there were two young men in Surnadale, whose names were Bard and Kolbein. They were both well-to-do, and though they were not akin, they had each a little before lost their father on a cruise to England. Hella was the name of Bard's house, and Granskeid was where Kolbein dwelt. They were much about the same age as Thorbjorn's sons, and they were all full of mirth and frolic. This was just about the time when Hacon Athelstane's foster-child was king of Norway.

Well, we must go on to say that this Kolbein, of whom we have spoken, grew very fond of coming to Thorbjorn's house, and when there thought it best sport of all to talk with Thordisa. Before long other folk began to talk about this; and so much was said about it that it came to her father's ears, and he thought he saw it all as clear as day. Then Thorbjorn spoke to his sons, and bade them find a cure for this. Gisli said it was easy enough to cure things in which there was no harm.

"If we are to speak, don't say things which seem as though you wanted to pick a quarrel."

"I see," said Thorbjorn, "that this has got wind far too widely, and that it will be out of our power to smother it. Nevertheless, too, it seems much more likely that thou and thy brother are cravens, with little or no feeling of honour."

Gisli went on to say, "Don't fret thyself, father, about his coming. I will speak to him to stop his visits hither."

"Ah!" cried out Thorbjorn, "thou art likelier to go and beg and pray him not to come hither, and be so eager as even to thank him for so doing, and to show thyself a dastard in every

way, and after all to do nothing if he does not listen to thy words."

Now Gisli goes away, and he and his father stayed their talk; but the very next time that Kolbein came thither, Gisli went with him on his way home when he left, and spoke to him, and says he will not suffer him to come thither any longer; "for my father frets himself about thy visits: for folks say that thou beguilest my sister Thordisa, and that is not at all to my father's mind. As for me, I will do all I can, if thou dost as I wish, to bring mirth and sport into thy house."

"What's the good," said Kolbein, "of talking of things which thou knowest can never be? I know not whether is more irksome to me, thy father's fretfulness, or the thought of giving way to his wish. 'Verily the words of the weak are little worth.'"

"That is not the way to take it," answers Gisli. "The end of this will be, that at last when it comes to the push I will set most store by my father's will. Methought now it was worth trying whether thou wouldest do this for my word's sake; then thou mightest have asked as much from me another time; but I am afraid that we shall not like it, if thou art bent on being cross-grained."

To that Kolbein said little, and so they parted. Then Gisli went home, and so things rested for a while, and Kolbein's visits were somewhat fewer and farther between than they had been. At last he thinks it dull at home, and goes oftener to Thorbjorn's house. So one day when he had come thither Gisli sat in the

hall and smithied, and his father and his brother and sister were there too. Thorkel was the cheeriest towards Kolbein; and these three—Thorkel, and Thordisa, and Kolbein—all sat on the cross-bench. But when the day was far spent, and evening fell, they rose up and went out. Thorbjorn and Gisli were left behind in the hall, and Thorbjorn began to say:

"Thy begging and praying has not been worth much; for both thy undertaking was girlish, and indeed I can scarce say whether I am to reckon thee and thy brother as my sons or my daughters. 'Tis hard to learn, when one is old, that one has sons who have no more manly thoughts than women had in olden times, and ye two are utterly unlike my brothers Gisli and Ari."

"Thou hast no need," answered Gisli, "to take it so much to heart; for no one can say how a man will behave till he is tried."

With this Gisli could not bear to listen longer to his father's gibes, and went out. Just then Thorkel and Kolbein were going out at the gate, and Thordisa had turned back for the hall. Gisli went out after them, and so they all walked along together. Again Gisli besought Kolbein to cease his visits, but Kolbein said he weened that no good would come of that. Then Gisli said:

"So you set small store by my words, and now we shall lay down our companionship in a worse way than I thought."

"I don't see how I can help that," said Kolbein.

"Why," said Gisli, "one of two things must happen: either

that thou settest some store by my words, or if thou dost not, then I will forsake all the friendship that has been between us."

"Thou must settle that as thou pleasest," says Kolbein; "but for all that I cannot find it in my heart to break off my visits."

At that Gisli drew his sword and smote at him, and that one stroke was more than enough for Kolbein.

Thorkel was very vexed at the deed, but Gisli bade his brother be soothed. "Let us change swords," he said; "and take thou that with the keenest edge." This he said, mocking; but Thorkel was soothed, and sate down by Kolbein.

Then Gisli went home to his father's hall, and Thorbjorn asked:

"Well, how has thy begging and praying sped?"

"Well," says Gisli, "I think I may say that it has well sped; because we settled ere we parted just now that Kolbein should cease his visits, that they might not anger thee."

"That can only be," said Thorbjorn, "if he be dead."

"Then be all the better pleased," says Gisli, "that thy will hath been done in this matter."

"Good luck to thy hand," said Thorbjorn. "Maybe after all that I have not daughters alone to my children."

CHAPTER III.

THE BURNING OF THE OLD HOUSE.

As for Thorkel, who had been Kolbein's greatest friend, he could not bear to be at home, nor would he change swords with Gisli, but went his way to a man called Duelling Skeggi, in the isle of Saxa. He was near akin to Kolbein, and in his house Thorkel stayed. In a little while Thorkel egged Skeggi on to avenge his kinsman, and at the same time to woo his sister Thordisa. So they went to Stock—for that was the name of Thorbjorn's farm—twenty of them together; and when they came to the house, Skeggi began to talk of being Thorbjorn's son-in-law, and of having Thordisa to wife. But Thorbjorn would not hear of the match. The story went that Bard, Kolbein's friend, had settled it all with Thordisa; and, at anyrate, Skeggi made up his mind that Bard was to blame for the loss of the match. So he set off to find Bard, and challenged him to fight on the isle of Saxa. Bard said he would be sure to come; he was not worthy to have Thordisa if he did not dare to fight for her with Skeggi. So Thorkel and Skeggi set out for Saxa with twenty-one men in all, and waited for the day fixed for the duel. But when three nights had come and gone, Gisli went to find Bard, and asks

whether he were ready for the combat. Bard says, Yes; and asked whether, if he fought, he should have the match.

"'Twill be time to talk of that afterwards," says Gisli.

"Well," says Bard, "methinks I had better not fight with Skeggi."

"Out on thee for a dastard!" says Gisli; "but though thou broughtest us all to shame, still for all that I will go myself."

Now Gisli goes to the isle with eleven men. Meantime Skeggi had come to the isle and staked out the lists for Bard, and laid down the law of the combat, and after all saw neither him nor any one to fight on the isle in his stead. There was a man named Fox, who was Skeggi's smith; and Skeggi bade Fox to carve likenesses of Gisli and Bard: "And see," he said, "that one stands just behind the back of the other, and this laughing-stock shall stand for aye to put them to shame."

These words Gisli heard in the wood, and called out:

"Thy house-carles shall have other handier work to do. Here behold a man who dares to do battle with thee!"

Then they stepped on the isle and fought, and each bore his own shield before him. Skeggi had a sword called "Warflame," and with it he smote at Gisli till the blade sang again, and Skeggi chaunted:

"Warflame fierce flickered,
Flaring on Saxa."

But Gisli smote back at him with his battle-axe, and took off the tail of his shield, and Skeggi's leg along with it; and as he smote he chaunted:

"Grimly grinned Ogremaw,
Gaping at Skeggi."

As for Skeggi, he ransomed himself from the island, and went ever after on a wooden leg. But Thorkel went home with his brother Gisli, and now their friendship was pretty good, and Gisli was thought to have grown a great man by these dealings.

That same winter Einar and Sigurd, the sons of Skeggi, set off from their house at Flydroness, with nigh forty men, and marched till they came in the night to Surnadale. They went first to Bard's house at Hella, and seized all the doors. Two choices were given him: the first, that he should lose his life; the other, that he should go with them against Thorbjorn and his sons. Bard said there were no ties between him and Thorbjorn and his sons. "I set most store on my life," he says; "as for the other choice, I think nothing of doing it."

So he set out with them, and ten men followed him. They were then in all fifty men. They come unawares on Thorbjorn's house at Stock. His men were so arranged that some of them were in the hall and some in the store-room. This store-room Gisli had built some years before, and made it in such wise that every plank had been cut asunder, and a loose panel left in the middle, and on the outside they were all fitted together, while within they were held by iron bolts and bars, and yet on the outside the planks looked as if they were all one piece. The weather that night was in this wise: the air was thick, and the wind sharp; and the blast stood right on to the store-room. Einar and Sigurd heaped a pile of wood both before the hall and

the store-room, and set fire to them. But when those in the store-room were ware of this, they threw open the outer door. By the entry stood two large pails or casks of whey, and they took the whey in goat-skins and threw it on the fire, and quenched it thrice. But the foe made the pile up again a little way from the door on either side, and then the fire soon began to catch the beams of the house. The heads of the household were all in that store-room—Thorbjorn, and Thorkel, and Gisli, and Isgerda, and Thordisa. Then Gisli stole away from the doorway to the gable-end, and pushed back the bolts, and thrust out a plank. After that he passed out there, and all the others after him. No men were on the watch there, for they were all guarding the door to see that none came out; but no man was ware of what was happening. Gisli and his kindred followed the smoke away from the house, and so got to the woods, and when they got so far they turned and looked back, and saw that the hall and the whole homestead were ablaze. Then Gisli chaunted—

"Flames flare fierce o'er roof and rafter,
High the hubbub, loud the laughter;
Hist with croak, and hark with howl,
Ravens flit and gray-wolves prowl:
Father mine, for lesser matter
Erst I fleshed my maiden steel;
Hear me swear amid this clatter,
Soon our foes my sword shall feel."

Now these are there in the waste, but their house burns to cold ashes. Those brothers, Einar and Sigurd, never left the spot till they made up their minds that Thorbjorn and his sons,

and all his household, had been burnt inside. They were thirty souls who were burnt inside the hall. So wherever those brothers went they told this story, that Thorbjorn was dead and all his household. But Gisli and his kindred never showed themselves till the others were well away. Then they got force together by stealth, and afterwards they fare by night to Bard's house, and set fire to the homestead, and burnt it up, and the men who were inside it. When they had done that deed, they went back and set about rebuilding their house. All at once Gisli took himself off, and no man knew what had become of him; but when spring came he came with it. Then they set to work and sold their lands secretly, but their goods and chattels they carried off. Now it was plain that Thorbjorn and his sons meant to change their abode and leave Norway; and that was why Gisli had gone away, that he might be busy building their ship. And all this was done so silently that few knew they had broken up their household before they had gone on shipboard, thirty men told, besides women. After that they hold on their course for the sea, and lay to in a haven under the lee of an island, and meant to wait there for a fair wind.

One day when the weather was good Gisli and his brother got into their boats. Ten men stayed behind with their ship, and ten got into each of the boats; but Thorbjorn stayed by the ship. Gisli and his brother row north along the land, and steer for Flydroness; for Gisli says he wishes to look those brothers up ere he leaves Norway for good and all. But when they got to Flydroness they hear that Einar and Sigurd had gone from

home to gather King Hacon's dues. So Gisli and his men turned after them, and lay in wait for them in the path which they knew they must take. Those brothers were fifteen in all, and so they met, and there was a hard fight. The end of it was that Einar and Sigurd fell, and all their followers. Gisli slew five men and Thorkel three. When the fight was over, Gisli says he has got an errand to do up at the farm. And Gisli went up to the farm, and into the hall, and sees where Skeggi lies, and comes on him, and hews off his head. They sacked the house, and behaved as much like enemies as they could, and took all they could carry with them. After that they row to their ships, and landed on the island, and made a great sacrifice, and vowed vows for a fair wind, and the wind comes. So they put to sea, and have Iceland in their mind's eye.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SOURSOPS IN ICELAND.

WELL, they had a long and hard passage, and are out more than a hundred days: they made the north of the island, and coasted it westward along the Strand, and so on west off the firths. At last they ran their ship into Dyrafirth, at the mouth of the Hawkdale river. Then they unlade their ship and set up tents, and it was soon noised abroad that a ship had come. There was a man named Thorkel who dwelt at Alvidra, on the north side of Dyrafirth: he was a wealthy man of good birth. In Springdale, on the south side of the firth, dwelt another Thorkel, the son of Eric. At that time all the land round the west firths was settled. This Thorkel, Eric's son, sold land in Hawkdale to Thorbjorn Soursop, for he was so called after he quenched the fire with the sour whey; the inner bight of the stream was already settled, and Thorgrim Bottlenose was the name of the man who lived there. Far up the dale dwelt another Thorkel, and his nickname was "Faulty." He had a wife, and her name was Thorhalla; she was a sister of Thorgrim Bottlenose. Thorkel the Faulty was just what his nickname called him, but it could not be said that Thorhalla made any of his faults better, for she was worse than her husband. They had a son called

Thorstein: he was tall and strong. In Tweendale, that turns aside from Hawkdale, dwelt a man whose name was Aunund: he was well to do, and a trustworthy man. So there, at Sæbol in Hawkdale, Thorbjorn, and Gisli, and Thorkel took up their abode, and Gisli built their house.

In the same neighbourhood dwelt Vestein, the son of Vestein. He was a seafaring man, but he had a house under Hest, a hill in Aunundarfirth. His sister's name was Auda. Just about this time Thorbjorn Soursop and Isgerda his wife died, and were buried in a howe in Hawkdale. Thorkel and Gisli took the homestead at Sæbol after him. A little after, Thorkel looked out for a wife. There was a man named Thorbjorn Sealnip. He dwelt at Talknafirth. His wife's name was Thordisa, and Asgerda was their daughter. Thorkel Soursop asked Asgerda to wife, and got her; but his brother Gisli wooed Auda, the sister of Vestein, and got her. So both of them went on living under the same roof at Sæbol in Hawkdale, and did not part their goods though they were married. The story goes on to say that one spring Thorkel of Alvidra had to make a journey south to Thorsness Thing, and Gisli and Thorkel, the Soursops, went with him. At that time Thorstein Codbiter dwelt on Thorsness. He was the son of Thorolf Mosttrarskegg. Thorgrim and Bork the Stout were the sons of Thorstein, and his daughter's name was Thordisa. When Thorkel had got through his business at the Thing, Thorstein Codbiter asked him and the Soursops to come to his house, and gave them good gifts, and ere they parted they asked Thorstein's sons to

come and see them the spring after, west at the Dyrafirth Thing. So the winter passed over, and there were no tidings. Now the next spring comes, and the sons of Thorstein fared from home—Thorgrim and Bork and fourteen men more. When they came west to the Valsere Thing they met the Soursops there, and they asked the sons of Thorstein to come home with them after the Thing, for up to that time they had been guests of Thorkel of Alvidra. So they accepted the bidding, and fared home with the Soursops. But Thordisa, the sister of those brothers, seemed fair in the eyes of Thorgrim, and he lifted up his voice and asked for her, and she was then and there betrothed to Thorgrim, and the wedding-feast took place at once, and it was settled that she should have Sæbol for her dower, the farm where these brothers had dwelt before. Then Gisli and Thorkel went to Hol and set up their abode there; but Thorgrim took up his abode there in the west, and dwelt at Sæbol. Bork, his brother, had the management in Thorsness when his father Thorstein died, and there with him dwelt his nephews Quarrelsome Stein and Thorodd.

So those brothers-in-law dwell hard by as neighbours in Hawkdale, and are great friends. Thorkel and Gisli built a fine house at Hol, so that it was soon no less a homestead than Sæbol: their lands touched, and their friendship seemed likely to last. Thorgrim had the priesthood, and he was a great stay to those brothers. Now they fare in spring-time to the leet, forty men of them together, and they were all in holiday clothes. There, too, was Vestein, Gisli's brother-in-law, and every man of the Soursops

following. Gest, the son of Oddleif, the wisest man in Iceland, had also come to that leet, and he turned into the booth of Thorkel the Wealthy of Alvidra. The Hawkdalemen sit at drink, while the rest of the freemen were at the court, for it was a Thing for trying suits. All at once there came into the Hawkdale booth a great oaf, Arnor by name, who spoke and said: "You Hawkdalemen are strange fellows, who take heed for naught but drink, and never go near the court where your followers have suits to settle. This is what all think, though I alone utter it."

Then Gisli said: "Let us go to the courts as soon as ever we can; maybe that others than Arnor utter this."

Now they go to the courts, and Thorgrim asks if there were any there who stood in need of their help, "for we will leave nothing undone to help our men, and they shall never be shorn of their rights so long as we stand straight."

Then Thorkel the Wealthy spoke and said: "This business that we have in hand is little worth. We will send and tell you as soon as we need your help."

Now men fell to talking about their band, how brave it was in attire, and about Thorgrim's haughty speech, and about his gallant bearing; and when men went home to their booths Thorkel the Wealthy said to Gest the Wise: "How long thinkest thou that the spirit of these Hawkdalemen will last? How long will they bear all before them?"

"They will not," said Gest, "be all of one and the same mind as they are now three springs hence."

But Arnor the oaf was by when Gest said this, and ran at once to the Hawkdale booth, and told these words which had passed between Thorkel and Gest.

Then Gisli answered: "He must have said this because all feel it; but let us beware that it does not turn out true, for Gest says sooth about many things; and now methinks I see a plan by which we may well guard against it."

"What is that?"

"We shall bind ourselves by more lasting utterances than ever. Let us four take the oath of foster-brothers."

Well, they all thought that good counsel; and after that they went out of their booth to the point of the "ere,"* and there cut up a sod of turf in such wise that both its ends were still fast to the earth, and propped it up by a spear scored with runes, so tall that a man might lay his hand on the socket of the spear-head. Under this yoke they were all four to pass—Thorgrim, Gisli, Thorkel, and Vestein. Now they breathe each a vein, and let their blood fall together on the mould whence the turf had been cut up, and all touch it; and afterwards they all fall on their knees, and were to take hands, and swear to avenge each the other as though he were his brother, and to call all the gods to witness.

But now, just as they were going to take hands, Thorgrim said: "I shall have quite enough on my hands if I do this towards Thorkel and Gisli, my brothers-in-law; but towards Vestein I have no tie to bind me to so great a charge." As he said this he drew back his hand.

* "Ere," old English for a sandy spit of land; from the Icelandic *eyri*.

"Then more will do the like," says Gisli, and drew back his hand. "I will be bound by no tie to the man who will not be bound by the same tie to my brother-in-law Vestein."

Now men began to think there was some weight in Gest's spaedom. But Gisli said to Thorkel: "All this happened as I foreboded, and this which we have done is of no good, for I guess that fate rules in this too."

Now men fare home from the leet, and all is still and tidingless.

CHAPTER V.

THE SOURSOPS ABROAD.

THAT summer there came a ship from the sea into Dyrafirth, owned by two brothers, Norsemen. One's name was Thorir, and the other's Thorarinn. They were men from "the Bay," in South Norway. The story runs that Thorgrim the Priest rides to the ship, and buys of the captains wood worth four hundreds in woollen, and pays some of the price down, and promises to pay the rest. So the Easterlings made their ship snug at Sandwater-mouth and got winter-quarters for themselves and their men at the house of a man called Oddi, who lived in Skutilsfirth. Now Thorgrim sends his son Thorodd to fetch home the wood, and bade him reckon it and know well every plank as he took it. So he comes up to the ship, and thought the terms of the bargain were not so clear as Thorgrim had told him; for now the Easterlings were unwilling to keep to what they had agreed at first, and the end was that Thorodd spake ill words to the Easterlings. That they would not stand, and fell on him, and slew him there and then. After that the Easterlings left the ship, and took horse, and went to ride to their quarters in Skutilsfirth. They rode all that day and the night after, till they came to the dale which turns off from Skutilsfirth. Here they break their fast, and afterwards

rode on again. Meanwhile Thorgrim had heard what had happened; how his son was slain, and the wood not handed over. Then he busked him for a journey, and had himself put across the firth. After the Easterlings he goes, all alone, and comes upon them as they lay and slept on a bit of mead. Thorgrim wakes Thorarinn, and prods him with the butt of his spear. He springs up, and was about to draw his sword, for he knows Thorgrim, but Thorgrim thrusts his spear through him. Now Thorir wakes and would avenge his brother, but Thorgrim slew him too with his spear. So that is called Breakfastdale, where they broke their fast, and the Easterlingsfall, where they lost their lives. Now Thorgrim goes home, and is famous for this deed. All that winter he stayed at home; but next spring the two brothers-in-law, Thorgrim and Thorkel, fitted out the ship which the Easterlings had owned for a foreign cruise, and they lade her with their goods, and were to sail for Norway. As for those Easterlings, they had been ill-doers in Norway, and were under a ban there. So they set sail the same summer, and Gisli also went aboard with his brother-in-law Vestein, and they sailed from Skeljawick in Steingrimsfirth. Aunund of Tweendale had care of Thorkel's and Gisli's farm while they were away, and Quarrelsome Stein took charge of Thorgrim's farm at Sæbol, along with his wife Thordisa.

At that time Harold Grayfell ruled over Norway. Thorgrim and Thorkel went north to Drontheim, and met the king there. They went in before him, and hailed him, and he was gracious to them. They became his thanes. They were well off both

for goods and honour. As for Gisli and Vestein they were more than a hundred days out, and about the first day of winter came upon the coast of Hordaland in Norway, in a great fog and storm, at dead of night. Their ship was dashed to pieces, but they saved their goods and crew. There was a man off the coast called Beard-Bjalf. He owned a ship, and was on his way to Denmark. So Gisli and Vestein dealt with him for half the ship. He heard they were brave fellows, and gave them half the ship, and they repaid him at once by giving him more than half her worth in goods. So they held on their course for Denmark to that mart called Viborg. They stayed there that winter with a man called Sigrhadd. There they were all three in good fellowship—Gisli, Vestein, and Bjalf. They were great friends, and many gifts passed between them. At that time Christianity had come into Denmark, and Gisli and his companions were marked with the cross, for it was much the wont in those days of all who went on trading voyages; for so they entered into full fellowship with Christian men. Early the spring after, Bjalf fitted out his ship for Iceland. Now there was a man named Sigurd, a Norseman: he was a trading partner of Vestein's, and was then away west in England. He sent word to Vestein, and said he wished to cease partnership with him, for he thought he needed his goods no longer. So Vestein asked leave of Gisli to go to meet him; "for," he said, "I have money and goods to seek in that country."

"Thou shalt pledge me thy word first," said Gisli, "never to leave Iceland again, if thou comest safe back, unless I give thee leave."

To that Vestein agreed.

Next morning Gisli rises up early and goes to the smithy. He was the handiest of men, and had the quickest wit. So Gisli smithies a silver coin which weighed an ounce. He bent back the coin and broke it in two, and forged it with twenty teeth. When it was in two pieces there were ten teeth on one bit and ten on the other, but when they were put together it looked as though it were one whole; yet it might be taken asunder at once. Now Gisli takes the coin in two, and gives one half into Vestein's hand, and the other he keeps himself. He bids him keep that as a token if anything befell them which they thought of weight. "And," says Gisli, "we will only send these tokens between us if our life is at stake; and in truth my heart tells me we shall need to send them, though we do not see each other face to face."

With that they parted, and Vestein sails to England, but Gisli and Bjalf to Norway. That summer they set sail for Iceland, and had thriven well in goods and honour, and they ceased their partnership, and Bjalf bought back the half of the ship that Gisli owned. So Gisli goes home to his house in Dyrafirth with twelve men. That same spring Thorgrim and Thorkel fitted out their ship and came to Dyrafirth in the summer; and the very same day that Gisli had sailed into the mouth of the Hawkdale river Thorgrim and Thorkel sailed into it after him. So those brothers, Gisli and Thorkel, met; and that was a very joyful meeting.

So each of them went to his own home.

CHAPTER VI.

GISLI AND THORKEL PART.

THORKEL the Soursop was very fond of dress and very lazy; he did not do a stroke of work in the housekeeping of those brothers; but Gisli worked night and day. It fell on a good drying day that Gisli set all the men at work hay-making, save his brother Thorkel. He alone of all the men was at home, and he had laid him down after breakfast in the hall, where the fire was, and gone to sleep. The hall was thirty fathoms long and ten broad. Away from it, and to the south, stood the bower of Auda and Asgerda, and there the two sat sewing. But when Thorkel wakes he goes toward the bower, for he heard voices, and lays him down outside close by the bower. Then Asgerda began to speak, and said:

"Help me, Auda dear; and cut me out a shirt for my husband Thorkel."

"I can't do that any better than thou," says Auda; "nor wouldst thou ask me to do it if thou wert making aught for my brother Vestein."

"All that touches Vestein is a thing by itself," says Asgerda; "and so it will be with me for many a day; for I love him more

than my husband Thorkel, though we may never fulfil our love."

"I have long known," said Auda, "how Thorkel fared in this matter, and how things stood; but let us speak no more of it."

"I think it no harm," says Asgerda; "though I think Vestein a good fellow. Besides I have heard it said that ye two—thou and Thorgrim—often had meetings before thou wert given away in marriage."

"No wrong came of it to any man," said Auda, "nor has any man found favour in my eyes since I was given to Gisli. There has been no disgrace. Do pray stop this idle talk."

And so they did; but Thorkel had heard every word they spoke, and now he raised his voice and said:

"Hear a great wonder,
Hear words of doom;
Hear matters mighty,
Murders of men!"

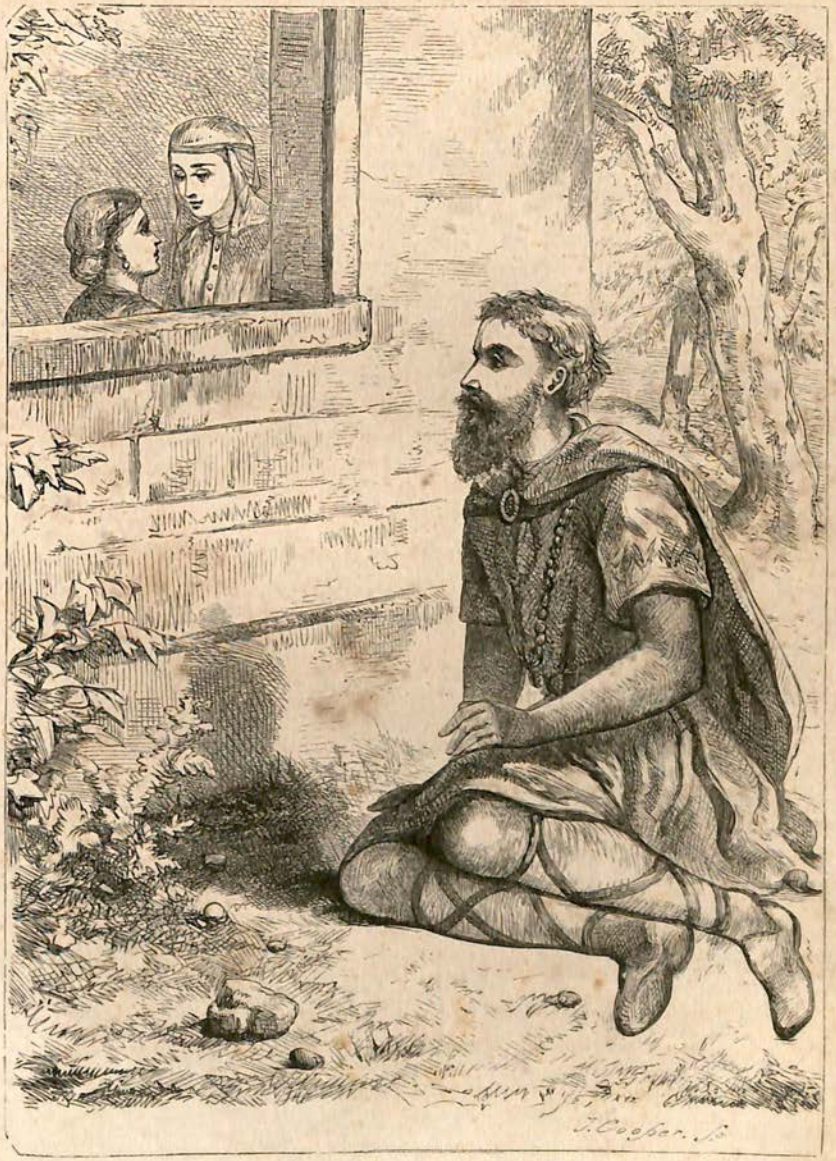
After that he goes away indoors. Then Auda went on to say:

"Oft comes ill from women's gossip, and it may be so, and much worse, from this thing. Let us take counsel against it."

"Oh," says Asgerda, "I have bethought me of a plan which will stand me in good stead."

"What is it, pray?" says Auda.

"I will throw my arms round Thorkel's neck when we go to bed this evening, and be as kind to him as I can; and his heart will turn at that, and he will forgive me. I will tell him too that this was all stories, and that there is not a word of truth in



THORKEL AT AUDA AND ASGERDA'S BOWER.

what we chattered. But if he will be cross and hold me to it, then tell me some other plan; or hast thou any plan?"

"I will tell thee my plan in the twinkling of an eye," says Auda. "I will tell my husband Gisli all that gives me any trouble, whether it be good or ill. He will know how to help me out of it, for that will be best for me in the end."

At even Gisli came home from the hay-field. It was Thorkel's wont to thank his brother Gisli every day for the work he had done, but now he did not, and never a word said he to Gisli.

Then Gisli went up to Thorkel and said: "Does aught ail thee, brother, that thou art so silent?"

"I have no sickness," says Thorkel; "but this is worse than sickness."

"Have I done aught, brother," says Gisli, "that displeases thee?"

"Thou hast done nothing of the sort."

"That makes me glad at once; for the last thing that I wish is that anything should come between our love. But still I would so like to know what is at the root of thy sadness."

"Thou wilt know it soon enough," says Thorkel, "though thou dost not know it now."

Then Gisli goes away and says no more, and men go to bed when night came. Thorkel ate little that night, and was the first to go to bed. But when Asgerda came to his bedside and lifted the bed-clothes, then Thorkel said to her:

"I do not mean to let thee sleep here to-night."

"Why, what is more fitting," she said, "than that I should sleep by my husband? Why hast thy heart so soon changed, and what is the matter?"

"Thou knowest very well, and I know it. It has been long hidden from me, but thy good name will not be greater if I speak it out."

"What's the good of talking like that?" she said. "Thou oughtest to know better than to believe the silly talk of us women, for we are ever chattering when we are alone about things without a word of truth in them; and so it was here."

Then Asgerda threw both her arms round his neck, and was soft and kind, and bade him never believe a word of it.

But Thorkel was cross, and bade her be off.

"Then," says Asgerda, "I will not strive with thee any longer for what thou wilt not grant. But I will give thee two choices: the first is, to treat all this as if it had been unspoken—I mean all that we have joked about, and to lay no faith on what is not true; the other is, that I take witness at once and be parted from thee. Then I shall do as I please, and maybe thou wilt then have something to tell of true hatred; and as for me, I will make my father claim at thy hand my dower and portion, and then surely thou wilt no longer be troubled with me as thy bed-fellow."

Thorkel was tongue-tied for a while. At last he said:

"My counsel to thee is to creep in on the side of the bed that belongs to thee. I can't waste all the night in keeping thee out."

So she goes to bed at once, and they make up their quarrel as though it had never happened. As for Auda, when she went to bed with her husband Gisli, she tells him all that she and Asgerda had said just as it happened, and begged him not to be wroth with her, but to give her good counsel if he saw any.

"For I know," she said, "that Thorkel will wish to see my brother Vestein dead, if he may have his way."

"I do not see," says Gisli, "any counsel that is good; but I will throw no blame on thee for this, because when things are once doomed, some one must utter the words that seem to bring them about."

Now that half-year passes away, and the flitting-days come. Thorkel tells his brother Gisli that he wishes to share all their goods between them, for he is going to join housekeeping with his brother-in-law Thorgrim.

"Brothers' goods are fairest to look on when they lie together, brother. Many things I see which whisper, 'Do not part.' It gladdens my heart to let things bide as they are. Do not let us part."

"Things cannot go on as they are," says Thorkel. "We cannot keep house together any longer, for there is great harm in this, that thou shouldest have all the toil and trouble about the farm, while I turn my hand to nothing which brings in any gain.

"Do not thou talk about that," says Gisli, "so long as I say never a word. I am well pleased with things as they are. Besides, we have gone through much together. We have been good

friends and bad friends. We have borne bad luck and good luck as brothers. But we were always best off when we stood shoulder to shoulder. Do not let us change now."

"Well," says Thorkel, "there's no use in talking. I have made up my mind to share our goods, and they shall be shared. As I ask for them to be shared, thou shalt have the house and heritage, and I the goods and chattels."

"As for that," says Gisli, "if it must come to that, and we are to part, do as thou likest—share or choose. I care not what I do."

The end of it was that Gisli shared; and Thorkel chose the goods and chattels, and Gisli kept the land. In their household were two poor children whom they had taken in, the offspring of their kinsman Ingialld, and these two they parted: the boy's name was Geirmund, and the girl's Gudrida. She stayed with Gisli, but Geirmund went with Thorkel. So Thorkel went away to his brother-in-law Thorgrim, and took up his abode with him; but Gisli had the farm at Hol to himself, and the household lacked nothing, but went on as well as before. And now the summer slips away, and the first winter night was nigh at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

VESTEIN COMES BACK TO ICELAND.

GISLI made a feast, and bade his friends to it; he wished to have a gathering, and so to welcome both the winter and his friends; but he had left off all heathen sacrifices since he had been in Viborg with Sigrhadd. He bade to the feast both the Thorkels and his cousins, the sons of Bjartmar. So that the day that the guests were looked for Gisli made ready his house. Then Auda, the housewife, spoke and said: "Now, methinks but one thing is wanting."

"What is that?" asked Gisli.

"This alone," said Auda, "that my brother Vestein is not here."

"Well," said Gisli, "we do not look at things in the same way. I would give much goods that he were not here, as I now ween he is."

There was a man of whom we have spoken before, Thorgrim Bottlenose; he dwelt at Nebstead, in the inner bight of the river. He was full of witchcraft and sorcery, and he was a wizard and worker of spells. This man Thorgrim and Thorkel asked to their feast, for they had as large a gathering as Gisli. Thorgrim, the priest of Frey, was a man well skilled in forging

iron. So those three went aside together—the two Thorgrims and Thorkel. Then Thorkel brings out the broken bits of "Graysteel," which had fallen to his lot when they parted their heritage, and Thorgrim forged out of it a spear, and that spear was all ready by even and fitted to its haft. It was a great spear-head, and runes were on it, and it was fitted to a haft a span long.

And when this was being done there came Aunund of Tweendale to Gisli's house, and took him aside to talk, and tells him that Vestein his brother-in-law has come into the land, and is now at his house under Hest, and that he will be with him that evening. Then Gisli called his two house-carles, Hallvard and Havard, and bids them go on a message north to Aunundar-firth.

"Find now my brother-in-law Vestein; I am told he has come home. Bear him my greeting, and bid him sit quietly at home till I come to see him; for my will is, that he should not come to this feast." Gisli gives them into their hands a purse, and in it half of the silver coin, for a token in case Vestein should not believe their story. Now the house-carles set off, and take ship out of Hawkdale, and row across to Brooksmouth. There they land, and go to a farmer named Bessi, who dwelt at Bessa-stead. To him Gisli had sent word that he should lend them two horses which he had, which were called "the Pair of Gloves." They were the fleetest horses in all the firths. He lent them the horses, and they got on their backs and rode till they came to Mossvale. After that they turned and rode along the firth.

But at the same time Vestein had started from home, and had got as far as beneath the sandhill at Mossvale, and then on to Holt. But the house-carles had ridden the upper road, and so they rode by and missed each other. There was a man named Thorvard who lived at Holt, and his house-carles were quarrelling over their work, and were striking at one another with their scythes, and gave one another bad wounds. Then Vestein came up and made them good friends again, so that both sides were well pleased. Then he rode on for Dyrafirth, and two Easterlings with him. By this time Gisli's house-carles had reached Hest. There they learn of Vestein's journey—how he had left home; and now they turn back after him as fast as they can. And when they come to Mossvale they see a train of men riding in the midst of the dale, and then a jutting crag hid them from their view. So they ride on up the dale, and when they come to Arnkelsbrink both their horses were foundered. But the house-carles run on on foot, and call out. Vestein and his men heard them cry, and by that time they had got up on Gemladaleheath. So Vestein waited there till the others come up. But when they meet, the house-carles tell him their errand and show him the token. Then he takes the other half of the coin out of his purse, and put the two bits together, and grew red, as he said:

"'Tis sooth every word of it, and I would have turned back had ye found me before; but now all the streams fall towards Dyrafirth, and I will ride thither, for I am eager to see my brother-in-law and my sister; 'tis long since we parted;

but these Easterlings shall turn back. As for ye, ye shall go the shortest way, as ye are afoot; but tell Gisli and my sister that I am coming to them, for I hope to get there safe and sound."

Now they cross the firth, and come to Hol, and tell Gisli all that had happened on their journey, and that Vestein was on his way thither.

"So it must be, then," said Gisli.

Now Vestein rides the inner road round Dyrafirth, but the house-carles had a boat, as was said before, and so they were far quicker. Vestein comes to Luta, his kinswoman, in Lambdale —that is far up in the bight of the firth. She had him ferried across the top of the fifth, and said to him:

"Beware of thyself, kinsman. Thou wilt need to take all care."

He said he would do all he could. Thence he was ferried over to Thingere, where a man dwelt whose name was Thorhall. Vestein went up to his house, and he lent him a horse. Vestein had with him his saddle and saddle-cloth, and rode with a streamer to his spear. Thorhall went with him on the way as far as Sandmouth, and offers to go with him as far as Gisli's house. Vestein said there was no need of that.

"Ah!" said Thorhall, "there have been many changes in Hawkdale since thou wert last here, and beware of thyself."

With these words they parted. Now Vestein rides till he comes to Hawkdale, and the evening was bright and starlit. But it so happened as he rode by Thorgrim's house at Sæbol in

the dusk that they were tethering the cattle—Geirmund the lad, the kinsman of Thorkel and Gisli, and along with him a woman whose name was Rannveiga. She makes up the beds for the cattle, while he drives them into her; and so as they were at that work there rides Vestein round the 'town' and meets Geirmund. Then Geirmund said: "Come not thou in here at Sæbol, but go to Gisli, and beware of thyself."

Just then Rannveiga came out of the byre, and looked at the man and thought she knew him, for she had often seen Vestein. So when they had tethered the cattle in the byre they fell to wrangling about the stranger, who he could have been, and they were hard at it when they reached the house. Thorgrim and Thorkel were sitting before the fire when they came in-doors, and Thorgrim asks if they had seen any one, and about what they were wrangling.

"Oh!" said Rannveiga, "I thought I saw that Vestein rode here round our 'town,' and he had on a blue cape and held a big spear in his hand with a streamer fluttering on it."

"What sayest thou to that, Geirmund?" asked Thorgrim.

"I did not see clearly," he answered; "but I thought 'twas the house-carle of Aunund of Tweendale, and he had on Gisli's cape, and rode one of his master's horses, and in his hand he had a salmon-spear with a landing-net bound on it."

"Now one of you must be telling lies," said Thorgrim. "Go now over to Hol, Rannveiga, and find out what strangers have come thither."

So she went and stood at the door. Outside the doorway

was Gisli, who greeted her and asked her to stay there, but she said she must go back home.

"What's thy errand?" he asked.

"I only wanted to have a word with Gudrida," she answered.

So Gisli called Gudrida, but when she came Rannveiga had nothing to say to her. Then Rannveiga said: "Where is the mistress Auda?"

"She is here," says Gisli, "inside the house. Auda, come and see Rannveiga," he calls out.

Then Auda went out to see Rannveiga, and asked what she wanted. But she said it was only about a little thing, and still she could not say what that little thing was.

So Gisli bade her do one thing or the other—stay there or go away; "for," he said, "'tis now getting so late that thou oughtest not to go back alone though the way be short."

Then she went home and was half as silly as she had been before, and she could tell nothing of any stranger that had come to Gisli's house.

Next morning Vestein made them bring in two bags which some of his lading was in, and which he had given over to Hallvard and Havard to bring. Out of these Vestein took seventy ells of hangings and a 'kerchief twenty ells long, all woven with a pattern of gold in three stripes. He also brought out two gilded basons. These treasures he took out, and to his sister he gave the 'kerchief, but to Gisli and Thorkel he gave the hangings and the basons between them, if Thorkel would take them. After that Gisli goes over to Sæbol, and both the Thorkels with him, to

see his brother Thorkel; and now Gisli says that Vestein has come to stay with him, and he shows Thorkel the treasures, and tells him how they were given between them, and bade him take them; but Thorkel says:

"Thou art worthy to have them all alone, and I will not take them. It is not so very plain how I shall repay them."

So Gisli goes home, and Thorkel will not touch the gifts; and Gisli thought that things all went in one and the same way.

CHAPTER VIII.

VESTEIN'S SLAYING.

It came out, too, at that feast that Gisli was restless at night, two nights together. He would not say what dreams he had, though men asked him.

Now comes the third night, and men go to their beds, and when they had slumbered a while a whirlwind fell on the house with such strength that it tore all the roof off on one side, and in a little while all the rest of the roof followed. Then rain fell from heaven in such a flood the like was never seen before, and the house began to drip and drip, as was likely when the roof was off. Gisli sprang out of bed and called on his men to show their mettle, and save the hay-stacks from being washed away; and so he left the house, and every man with him, except a thrall, whose name was Thord the Hareheart, who was nearly as tall as Gisli. Vestein wanted to go with Gisli, but Gisli would not suffer it. So when they were all gone Auda and Vestein draw their beds from the wall, where the water dripped down on them, and turn them end on to the benches in the midst of the hall. The thrall too stayed in the house, for he had not heart enough to go out of doors in such a storm.

And a little before dawn some one stole softly into the hall, and stood over against Vestein's bed. He was then awake, and a spear was thrust then and there into his chest, right through his body. But when Vestein got the thrust, he sprang up and called out: "Stabbed! stabbed!" and with that he fell dead on the floor.

But the man passed out at the door.

Meanwhile Auda awakes, and sees what work was being done. Now Thord the Hareheart comes up, and she told him to pluck the weapon out of the wound, for in those days it was a settled thing that the man was bound to avenge the slain who took the weapon out of the wound, and it was called secret slaying, but not murder, if, when the deed was done, the weapon were left behind. But Thord was so afraid of the dead that he did not so much as dare to come nigh the spot. Then Gisli came in, and spoke to the thrall, and bade him let it alone; and then Gisli went up and took the spear away, and cast it, all bloody as it was, into a chest, and let no man see it. After that he sat down on the bedside, and laid out the body as was the wont; and Gisli thought he had suffered a great loss, and many others with him.

Then Gisli said to Gudrida, his foster-child:

"Thou must go over to Sæbol, and find out what men are about there; and I send thee because I trust thee best of all in this and in all other things."

So she went to Sæbol, and found them already risen when she got there, and they were all sitting with their weapons.

There were both the Thorgrims and Thorkel. They were slow to greet her, for most of them had scarce a word to say. At last they ask her what news, and she tells them that Vestein was slain or murdered.

"We should have thought that great news once," said Thorkel.

Then Thorgrim went on: "We are bound to bury Vestein as worthily as we can. We will come and help to lay him in his howe. Tell Gisli we will come, too, this very day. Sooth to say, such a man's death is a great loss."

After that she went home, and tells Gisli that Thorgrim the priest sat with his helm on his head and his sword at his belt, and all his war-gear, when she went in; that Thorgrim Bottlenose had a pole-axe in his hand, and that Thorkel had a sword in his hand half-drawn. All men were up and about, and some of them armed, when she reached Sæbol.

"Just as I thought," said Gisli.

Now Gisli made ready to lay Vestein in his howe, and they meant to lay him in the sandhill which looks down on the tarn just below Sæbol, and as they were on their way with the body Thorgrim came up with many men to meet them. And when they had heaped up the howe, and were going to lay the body in it, Thorgrim the priest goes up to Gisli, and says, "'Tis the custom, brother-in-law, to bind the hellshoe on men, so that they may walk on them to Valhalla, and I will now do that by Vestein."

And when he had done it, he said:

"I know nothing about binding on hellshoon if these loosen."

Then they sat down outside the howe and talked, and Gisli asks if any one thought he knew who had done that deed, but all thought it most unlikely that any there knew who had done this crime.

Thorkel asks Gisli: "How Auda bore her brother's death? Does she weep much?"

"I should think thou knowest well how she bears it. She shows it little and feels it much. I dreamed a dream," says Gisli, "the night before last, and last night too, but I will not tell it, nor say who did this slaying, but my dreams all point to it. Methought I dreamt the first night that an adder crept out of a house I know, and stung Vestein to death. And last night I dreamt that a wolf ran from the same house and tore Vestein to death; but I told neither dream up to this time, because I did not wish that any one should interpret them." Then he chaunted a song:

"Twice I dreamt it! thrice I could not!
Vestein, Woden's darling, would not
Have been wakened thus I ween,
When we sat in Vibjorg drinking,
Never from the wine-cup shrinking,
No man sitting us between."

Again Thorkel asks: "How bore Auda her brother's death? Does she weep sore?"

"Oft askest thou the same thing, kinsman," said Gisli, "and thou art very eager to know this."

Again Gisli chaunted a song :

"Deep beneath her golden veil
Hides her grief that lady pale ;
Still down fields where roses blush
Streams from slumber's fountain gush.
From her heart dim mists arise,
Filling all her beauteous eyes,
Down her cheeks tears chase each other :
Thus Auda mourneth for her brother."

And again he chaunted :

"She the goddess, ring-bestowing,
Sets the waves of sorrow flowing ;
From her golden eyebrows pressed,
Down they dash upon her breast.
Vestein's voice no longer singeth,
Pearl on pearl his sister stringeth ;
Gems that round her dark eyes glisten :
My song is o'er—no longer listen !"

Now these brothers go away both together, and as they went Thorkel said :

"These have been great tidings, and to thee they must seem more mournful than to us ; but after all, every one must bear his own burden, for every one walks farthest with his own self. Now I would, brother, that thou dost not let this take such hold on thee that men should fall to wondering about it ; and so my wish is, that we take to some sports, and that now everything should be with us as it hath been when we were the best friends.

"That is well spoken," said Gisli, "and I will willingly do that—only with this bargain, that if anything ever befalls thee

which thou feelest as much as I do this, then thou shalt give me thy word to behave just as thou askest me to behave now."

To that Thorkel agreed, and after that they each go home, and Vestein's ale of heirship was brewed and drunk, and when that was done each man went to his own home, and all was quiet.

But men say that all that great storm was the work of Thorgrim Bottlenose, with his sorcery and witchcraft, and that he had so framed his spells as to get a good chance at Vestein while Gisli was not near him; for they did not dare to fall on him if Gisli were by. But after the storm Thorgrim, the priest of Frey, did the deed, and slew Vestein, as we have already said.

So now the sports were set afoot as though nothing had happened. Those brother's-in-law, Thorgrim and Gisli, were very often matched against each other, and men could not make up their minds which was the stronger, but most thought Gisli had most strength. They were playing at the ball on the tarn called Sedgetarn. On it there was ever a crowd. It fell one day when there was a great gathering that Gisli bade them share the sides as evenly as they could for a game.

"That we will with all our hearts," said Thorkel; "but we also wish thee not to spare thy strength against Thorgrim, for the story runs that thou sparest him; but as for me I love thee well enough to wish that thou shouldst get all the more honour if thou art the stronger."

"We have not put that yet to the proof," says Gisli; "maybe the time may come for us to try our strength."

Now they began the game, and Thorgrim could not hold his own. Gisli threw him and bore away the ball. Again Gisli wished to catch the ball, but Thorgrim runs and holds him and will not let him get near it. Then Gisli turned and threw Thorgrim such a fall on the slippery ice that he could scarce rise. The skin came off his knuckles, and the flesh off his knees, and blood gushed from his nostrils. Thorgrim was very slow in rising. As he did so he looked towards Vestein's howe, and chaunted :

"Right through his ribs,
My spear-point went crashing ;
Why should I worry ?
'Twas well worth this thrashing."

Gisli caught the ball on the bound, and hurled it between Thorgrim's shoulders so that he tumbled forwards, and threw his heels up in the air, and Gisli chaunted :

"Bump on his back
My big ball went dashing ;
Why should I worry—
'Twas I gave the thrashing."

Thorkel jumps up and says : "Now we can see who is the strongest or is the best player. Let us break off the game." And so they did.

CHAPTER IX.

THORGRIM'S SLAYING.

Now the games ceased, and the summer comes on, and there was rather a coldness between Thorgrim and Gisli. Thorgrim meant to have a harvest feast on the first night of winter, and to sacrifice to Frey. He bids to it his brother Bork, and Eyjolf the son of Thord, and many other great men. Gisli too made ready a feast, and bids to it his brothers-in-law from Arnafirth, and the two Thorkels; so that there were full sixty men at his house. There was to be a drinking-bout at each house, and the floor at Sæbol was covered with sedge won from Sedgetarn. Now when Thorgrim and his men were busy putting up the hangings in the hall, Thorgrim all at once said to Thorkel: "Those hangings would come in well—those fine ones I mean—that Vestein wished to give thee; methinks there is great difference between your having them for a day or having them altogether. I wish thou wouldst send for them now."

"The man," said Thorkel, "who knows how to forbear is master of all knowledge. I will not send for them."

"Then I will," said Thorgrim; and with that he bade Geirmund go and fetch them.

"I have work to do," said Geirmund, "and I have no mind to go."

Then Thorgrim goes up to him, and gave him a great buck-horse on the ear, and said:

"Be off with thee now, if thou likest it better."

"So I will," he said, "though I have less mind than ever; but be sure I'll do my best to give thee the gray mare instead of thy horse. Then we shall be quits."

So he went away; but when he gets to Gisli's house, Gisli and Auda were hard at work putting up the hangings. Geirmund told his errand, and the whole story.

"Well, Auda," said Gisli, "wilt thou lend them the hangings?"

"Why ask me at all," says Auda, "when thou knowest that I would neither grant them this nor aught else that would do them any honour?"

"Did my brother Thorkel wish it?" asks Gisli.

"He was well pleased that I came for them."

"That alone is quite enough," said Gisli; and with that he gives him the rich hangings, and went back with him on the way. Gisli goes with him right up to the farm-yard, and then said:

"Things now stand in this wise: I think I have made thy errand turn out well, and now I wish thou wouldst be yielding to me in what I want, for gift answers to gift, you know, and one hand washes the other. My wish is, that thou wouldst push back the bolts of the three doors to-night. Think how thou wast bidden to set out."

"Will there be any risk to thy brother Thorkel?" said Geirmund.

"None at all," said Gisli.

"Then that shall come to pass," said Geirmund.

And now when he comes home he casts down the costly hangings, and Thorkel said:

"Unlike is Gisli to other men in long-suffering. He is far better than we."

"For all that," said Thorgrim, "we need these pretty things; so let us e'en put them up."

After that the guests who were bidden came at even. Now the weather thickens, and a snow-drift falls that night and covers all paths.

Bork and Eyjolf came to the feast with a hundred and twenty men, and there were half as many at Gisli's house. Men took to drinking in the evening, and after that they go to bed and sleep.

Then Gisli said to Auda his wife:

"I have not given fodder to Thorkel the Wealthy's horse. Come now with me and undo the locks at the gate, and watch while I am away, and undo the locks again when I come back."

He takes the spear "Graysteel" out of the chest, and is clad in a blue cape, and in his kirtle and linen breeks and shoes. So he goes to the brook which runs between the farms, whence each drew water for its cattle. He goes down to the brook by the path, and then wades along it to the other path that led up

to the other farm. Gisli knew all the ins and outs of the house at Sæbol, for he had built it himself. There was a way from the water into the byre. That was where he got in. There in the byre stood thirty cows, back to back; he knots together the tails of the kine, and locks up the byre, and makes it so fast that it cannot be opened if any one came from the inside. After that he goes to the dwelling-house, and Geirmund had done his work well, for there was not a bolt to any of the doors. Now he goes in and shuts the door again, just as it had been locked the evening before. Now he takes his time, and stands and spies about if any were awake, and he is soon aware that all men are asleep. There were three lamps in the hall. Then he takes some of the sedge from the floor, and makes a wisp of it, and throws it on one of the lights, and quenches it. Again he stands awhile, and spies if any man had awoke, and cannot find that any are awake. Then he takes another wisp and throws it at that light which stood next, and quenches that. Then he became aware that all men cannot be asleep; for he sees now a young man's arm comes toward the third light, and pulls down the lamp, and puts out the light.

Now he goes farther in along the house till he comes to the shut bed where Thorgrim and his sister Thordisa slept. The lattice was ajar, and there they are both in bed. Then he goes thither, and puts out his hand to feel, and touches her breast; for she slept on the outside.

Then Thordisa said: "Why is thy hand so cold, Thorgrim?" and wakes him up.

"Wilt thou that I turn to thee?" asked Thorgrim.

She thought he had laid his hand on her.

Then Gisli bides awhile, and warms his hand in his shirt; but they two fell asleep again.

Now he takes hold of Thorgrim gently, so that he woke and turned towards Thordisa, for he thought she had roused him.

Then Gisli lifts the clothes off them with one hand, while with the other he thrusts Thorgrim through the body with "Gray-steel," and pins him to the bed.

Now Thordisa cries out: "Wake up men in the hall; my husband Thorgrim is slain!"

Gisli turns short away to the byre. He goes out where he had meant, and locks it up strongly behind him. Then he goes home by the same way, and his footsteps cannot be seen. Auda pushes back the bolts when he came home, and he gets into bed, and makes as though nothing had happened, or as though he had naught to do but sleep.

But down at Sæbol all the men were mad with drink, and knew not what to do. The deed came on them unawares, and so no course was taken that was of any good.

At last Eyjolf of Otterdale said: "Here have happened ill tidings, and great tidings, and all the folk have been bereft of their wits. It seems to me the best thing were to light the lamps, and run to the doors, that the manslayer may not get out."

And so it was done, and men thought when they could not lay hands on the manslayer, that it must have been some one in the house who had done the deed.

So time runs on till day came. Then they took Thorgrim's body and plucked out the spear, and he was laid out for burial, and sixty men followed him. So they fare to Gisli's house at Hol. Thord the Hareheart was out of doors early, and when he sees the band, he runs in and says that a host of men were marching on the house, and was quite out of breath.

"That is well," said Gisli, and chaunted a stave:

"Mighty man! my mind is easy;
Too many have I done to death
To be scared by tidings queasy,
Uttered by idiots out of breath.
No! I lie and take my slumber;
Though this lord is stretched on earth;
Idle rumours without number
Vex the folk and mar their mirth."

Now they come to the farm, Thorkel and Eyjolf, and go up to the shut-bed where Gisli and his wife slept; but Thorkel, Gisli's brother, stepped up first on to the floor, and stands at the side of the bed, and sees Gisli's shoes lying all frozen and snowy. He kicked them under the footboard, so that no other man should see them.

Now Gisli greets them and asks the news. Thorkel said there were both great and bad news, and asks what it might mean, and what counsel was best to take.

"Then there has been scant space between two great and ill deeds," said Gisli: "but we shall be ready enough to lay Thorgrim in his howe, and you have a right to ask that of us, for it is our bounden duty to do it with all honour."

THORGRIM'S SLAYING.

They took that offer gladly; and all together went to Sæbol to throw up the howe, and lay Thorgrim in his ship.

Now they heap up the howe after the fashion of the olden time, and when they were just about to close the howe Gisli goes to the mouth of the stream, and takes up a stone so big that it looked like a rock, and dashes it down on the ship, so that every timber cracked again, and the whole ship creaked and groaned. As he did that he said :

"I know nothing of making a ship fast if any weather stirs this."

Some now said that this looked very like what Thorgrim had done to Vestein when he spoke about the hellshoon.

Now they made them ready to go home from the howe, and Gisli said to his brother :

"Methinks I have a right to call on thee, brother, that our friendship should now be as good as when it was best. Now let us set some sports afoot."

Thorkel took that well enough, and they parted and went home. Gisli's house was now quite full, and the feast came to an end, and Gisli gives good gifts to his guests.

CHAPTER X.

GISLI BETRAYS HIMSELF.

Now Thorgrim's ale of heirship is brewed and drunk, and Bork gives good gifts to many of his friends. The next thing we have to say is, that Bork bargains with Thorgrim Bottlenose that he should work spells and charms, by which no man should be able to house or harbour him that had slain Thorgrim, however great their will might be, and that the slayer should have no rest on land. An ox nine winters old was given him for this; and now Thorgrim sets about his spells over his cauldron, and makes him a high-place, and fulfils his work with all witchcraft and wickedness. After that the guests broke up, and each man went to his own abode.

And now, too, a thing happened which seemed strange and new. No snow lodged on the south side of Thorgrim's howe, nor did it freeze there. And men guessed it was because Thorgrim had been so dear to Frey for his worship's sake that the god would not suffer the frost to come between them.

Now Bork sets up his abode with Thordisa, and takes his brother's widow to wife, with his brother's goods; that was the rule in those days—wives were heritage like other things. But Thordisa was not single when this happened, and after a while

she bears a son to Thorgrim, and he is sprinkled with water, and at first called Thorgrim, after his father; but as he grew up he was thought snappish and unyielding in temper, and so his name was changed to suit his mood, and he was called Snerrir the Snarler, and afterwards Snorro.

So Bork abode there that half-year, and the sports they had spoken of were set afoot. There was a woman named Audbjorga who dwelt at the top of the Dale at Anmarkstead. She was sister to Thorgrim Bottlenose. Her husband had been that Thorkel of whom we have spoken. Her son's name was Thorstein, and he was about the strongest man in all the west country, save Gisli. They are partners in the game at ball, Gisli and Thorstein, and against them were matched Bork and Thorkel. One day a host of men came to see the game, for many were eager to behold the sport, and all wanted to know who was the strongest man and the best player. But here, as elsewhere, it happened that the players played with greater spirit when there were many lookers-on. It is said that Bork could not stand against Thorstein that day, and at last Bork got wroth, and broke asunder Thorstein's bat; but Thorstein gave him a fall, and sent him spinning along the slippery ice. But when Gisli sees that he says:

"Thorstein shall go on playing with Bork with all his might. I will change bats with thee."

So they changed bats, and Gisli sate him down and tries to put the broken bat to rights, and then he looks at Thorgrim's howe. There was snow on the ground, but on the south side

of the howe there was no snow; and there, up on the steep brink sat Thordisa and many other women, who thought it fun to look on the game.

Then Gisli—woe worth the day!—chaunted this song:

"O'er him who Thor's grim vizard wore
Melt, wreath by wreath, snow-hangings hoar.
Few have the wit to understand
The riddle of this mound of land.
I harmed him? No! I harmed him not;
A mansion bright is here his lot;
The priest unto his god I gave,
And Frey now warms his servant's grave."

Thordisa heard these verses, and learned them by heart. She goes home, and understood their meaning at once.

Now they leave off playing, and Thorstein sets out to go home. There was a man named Thorgeir, called Thorgeir the Gorcock. He lived at Gorcockstead. There was another man named Berg; his nickname was Shortshanks. He lived at Shortshanks-mire, west of the river. Now as men fare home they talk about the games; and Thorstein and Berg from talking fell to quarrelling. Berg takes Bork's side, but Thorstein stands up for himself. At last Berg smote Thorstein with the back of his axe; but Thorgeir threw himself between them, so that Thorstein could not avenge himself. So he goes home to his mother Audbjorga, who binds up his wound, for the skin was broken, and she is ill-pleased at his plight.

All that night the carline could not sleep, so much did she take it to heart. The weather was cold, but still and bright.

But she goes once or twice round the house widdershins,* and snuffs to all airts, and draws in the air. And as she did this the weather began to change, and there was a driving sleet, and after that a thaw; and a flood poured down the hillside; and a snow-slip fell on the farm of Berg, and there twelve souls lost their lives, and the tokens of the landslip are still to be seen.

Now Thorstein goes to Gisli, and he sheltered him, and sent him south to Borgarfirth, and so abroad. But as soon as Bork heard of this black deed, he went straight to Anmarkstead, and made them seize Audbjorga, and takes her out to Saltness, and stones her with stones till she dies. And when this is noised abroad, Gisli goes from home to Nebstead, and seizes Thorgrim Bottlenose, and brings him to Saltness, and there a goat-skin is drawn over his head, that his evil eye may be harmless, and he too is stoned to death, and buried by his sister's side, on the ridge between Hawkdale and Tweendale. And now all is quiet, and the spring draws on.

Now Bork makes up his mind to set off south to Thorsness, and thinks to change his abode thither, and thinks he has made rather a sorry figure there away west: lost such a man as Thorgrim was, and got no amends for it. Still he makes ready to go, and means first to set his house to rights, and then to make another journey to fetch his wife and goods. Thorkel too, the Soursop, makes up his mind to go with his brother-in-law Bork.

So men say that Thordisa, Gisli's sister, went with Bork a bit of the way, and as they went Bork said:

* "Widdershins"—*i.e.* against the sun.

"I wish now thou wouldest tell me why thou wast all at once so sad last autumn when we broke up the games. Thou knowest thou saidst thou wouldst tell me ere I went away."

They had just then come to Thorgrim's howe as he uttered these words.

Then she stamps her foot on the ground, and says it was no use to fare farther. And now she tells him of the verses that Gisli had chaunted as he mended the bat and looked at Thorgrim's howe; and recites the verses.

"I ween," she said, "thou hast no need to look anywhere else for Thorgrim's manslayer, and thou mayst sue him for it with a safe heart, for he took the slaying on himself in those verses."

Then Bork grew awfully angry, and said:

"I will now turn back at once and slay Gisli. The best way is to waste no more time."

But Thorkel says he will not agree to that. "I am not quite sure whether this be true or not. Bear in mind the saw that says 'Women's counsel is always unlucky.' For even though this should be as bad as she has said, surely, Bork, it is better to follow the law of the land in this matter and make the man an outlaw; for thou hast the cause so made to thy hand that Gisli must be found guilty, even though he had some excuse. So that we shall be able to manage this suit as we choose if we take the right steps, and that is far better than spoiling everything by rushing on so madly against all reason."

The end was, that he had his way.

CHAPTER XI.

GISLI AN OUTLAW.

So Bork and his men rode on after that by the path over the sands till they get across the mouth of Sandwater; there they get off their horses and bait. Then Thorkel says he wishes to see his brother-in-law Aunund, and that he will ride on hard before them. But as soon as ever he was out of sight he rides straight for Hol, and says what had happened, and how Thordisa had given out that Gisli slew Thorgrim.

"Now," he says, "the story is in every man's mouth."

Gisli was silent a while, and then chaunted:

> "My sister loves to tire her head,
> But little thinks of Gudrun dead—
> Gudrun, that high-souled Gjuki's child,
> Who saw her husband slain, and smiled;
> Another husband she might have,
> But barren lies a brother's grave;
> And so, to 'venge her brother's fall,'
> She slew her husband, sons, and all.

"And yet I never thought she would do this, for I think I have often shown that her dishonour was not a whit less felt by me than my own. Sometimes, too, I have had my life in peril for her sake, but now she deals me this death-blow. But what am I to look for at thy hands, kinsman, now that I have done such a deed?"

"This," said Thorkel, "I will warn thee if I am myself aware that men are about to lie in wait for thy life, but I will give thee no other help for which I may get into trouble. Methinks, too, thou hast much misdone against me—slain both my brother-in-law, and partner, and bosom friend."

"Well," says Gisli, "was it not to be looked for, for such a man as Vestein was, that some revenge must be had for his loss? I would not answer thee as thou answerest me; nor would I do as thou doest."

So those brothers parted, and now Thorkel rides back to meet Bork, and they ride west across the heath. Bork does not draw bridle till he comes south to Thorsness, and sets his house in order there. As for Thorkel Soursop he buys him land at Bardastrand at a place called "the Combe."

But when the summoning days are coming on Bork sets out with sixty men for the west firths, and means to summon Gisli to take his trial at Thorsness Thing, and Thorkel went with him, and Thorodd and Quarrelsome Stein, Bork's nephews, the sons of Thordisa, the daughter of Thorstein Codbiter. There was an Easterling too, named Thorgrim, who went with them.

So they all fared till they came to Sandwatermouth. Then Thorkel says that he has some debts to call for at a farm called Hol, farther on in their way.

"I will ride on first," he says; and so he does. But as soon as ever he reached the farm he bade the housewife change horses with him.

"But let this horse of mine stand outside before the door,

saddled and bridled, and when they come by—my fellow-travellers—say I am indoors telling silver."

She did as he bade her—got him another horse; and he rides might and main to Hol, sees Gisli, and tells what was about to befall him. Gisli asks Thorkel again what counsel was best to take, and what countenance he will give him. But Thorkel answers as before that he will do naught else but warn him if any danger is about to befall him.

Now Thorkel rides away, and so shapes his course that he rode round behind Bork and his fellows, mounts his own horse, and overtakes them. He delays them as much as he can, and makes them lose much time. But as soon as those brothers parted—Thorkel and Gisli—Gisli takes two sledges, and drives off with them into the wood, with all his goods and chattels: he had already sold his land to Thorkel, Eric's son: and he takes Thord the Hareheart, his thrall, with him. Then Gisli said to Thord:

"Oft hast thou been faithful and obedient to me, and done my bidding, and I am bound to repay thee well." It was ever Gisli's wont to wear a blue cape, and he was often well clad; and now Gisli goes on to say:

"I will give thee this cape, friend; put it on at once, and get up on the last sledge. But I will lead the horses and wear thy cloak." So they did that, and Thord thanks him over and over again for the gift.

Again Gisli said:

"Bear in mind, though men may follow on our heels, never

to answer a word if they call out to thee! But if the worst comes to the worst, and they try to do thee harm, jump down and run away into the wood, and let it shield us."

So they changed clothes. Thord was something like Gisli in bearing and gait, and a tall, proper man, but as to his courage and wit there was not a pin to choose between them; he had not a spark of either.

Now, Bork and his friends see Gisli going off into the wood, and run after them as hard as they can. But when Thord sees that, he jumps off the sledge in a trice, and runs nimbly among the trees. They all thought they knew Gisli, and press on after him, and call out to him, but he utters never a word. Then Thorgrim the Easterling hurls his spear after him, and hit the thrall between the shoulders, and he fell flat on his face, and needed no more.

Then Bork bawled out "Good luck to thee for thy shot, thou happy man!"

As for the brothers Thorodd and Quarrelsome Stein, they spoke together and said: "We will e'en hold on after the thrall, and see if he shows any sport."

So they turned after him.

But when Bork and his friends came to the man in the blue cape they stripped him of it, and saw who it was. And now they think the deed not so lucky as they weened at first, for they saw it was only Thord the Hareheart.

As for those brothers, it is said they saw Gisli near enough to know him among the trees. Then one of them hurled a spear at

him, but he catches it in the air, and hurls it back, and it comes towards Thorodd's waist, and flies right through him. Then Stein turns back to meet his companions, and tells them what had happened.

After that they all went into the wood to beat it for Gisli. And lo! the Easterling sees that the twigs stirred in one place, and he casts a spear at a venture thither, and hits Gisli in the calf. But he sends the spear back again to its owner, and aims so that it struck the Easterling in the breast, and slew him there and then.

Now Bork and his men beat about the wood and cannot find him; and then they turn back to Gisli's house and set the suit on foot against him, for now the proofs were as plain as day, and they had more than guesswork to go on. They did not plunder anything there. So Bork fares back home, little pleased with his journey.

Now Gisli goes up to the fell which stands by his farm, and there he binds his wounds. He stays there so long as Bork and his men are in his homestead, and thence he sees all that passes. As soon as they are gone he goes home and makes ready to leave Hol with all his household. He takes a boat and so flits his goods and cattle. Auda his wife went with him and Gudrida, his foster-child. He sails out of Dyrafirth as far as Husaness, and there lands. Gisli goes up to the farm, and meets a man, who asks him what man he was. Gisli told him what he pleased, but not the real truth. With that Gisli takes up a stone and throws it out on to the Holm, which lies off the land there, and bade the churl's son do the like when he got home, and said per-

haps he would then know what man had been there. But there was never a man who could throw a stone so far; and here again it came out that Gisli was better than most others in feats of strength. After that he went on board his boat and rows round the ness, and across Arnarfirth, and across that firth that turns aside from Arnarfirth, and is called Geirthiofsfirth. There he set up his abode, and built a whole homestead, and dwelt there that winter.

The next thing that happens is that Gisli sends word to his brothers-in-law, Helgi, and Sigurd, and Vestgeir, to go to the Thing and offer an atonement for him, that he might not be outlawed. So they set off for the Thing, the sons of Bjartmar, and could bring nothing to pass about the atonement; and men go so far as to say that they behaved very ill, so that they almost burst out into tears ere the suit was over. They were then very young, and Bork the Stout was so wroth they could do nothing with him.

When the Thing was over they went west and saw Thorkel the Wealthy of Alvidra, and tell him all that had happened, and begged him to see Gisli and tell him, for they said they did not dare to say to his face that he was an outlaw.

So Gisli was outlawed. That was the great news at that Thing. And Thorkel the Wealthy went and told Gisli. Then Gisli chaunted this stave:

"At Thorsness Thing
My suit at law
Had never failed
For quirk or flaw,

Had Vestein's heart,
That never blenched,
In Bjartmar's babies
Burned unquenched.

"They quailed, those kinsmen of my wife,
When all their souls should warm with strife.
To think that here was work to do,
And foes to foil and conquer too.
And so they fled the throng of men,
As when, with addle egg of hen,
The base-born thrall is pelted down
By all the riff-raff of the town.

"Evil tidings from the North,
An outlaw now I wander forth ;
A forfeit life by land and sea—
None dares to speak a word for me :
But still, O man in battle tried,
O bounteous man, whate'er betide,
Know this, that vengeance shall be mine
On those two caitiffs, Bork and Stein."

Both those namesakes, the Thorkels, say they will give him all the shelter they can, so that they run no risk of losing life or land. After that they went home.

CHAPTER XII.

GISLI BEGINS TO DREAM.

THE next three years Gisli was sometimes in his house at Geirthiofsfirth, and sometimes with Thorkel the Wealthy, harboured by stealth. Other three years he spent in roaming over the land, and going from house to house asking help and countenance from great chiefs; but something always tripped him up everywhere, so that naught came of it. So mighty was that spell that Thorgrim's witchcraft had thrown on him that it was fated no chief should shelter him, and no one ever went heartily into his cause. After those six years were over he spent his time for the most part in Geirthiofsfirth, sometimes in his house, over which Auda ruled, and sometimes in the hiding-place which he had hollowed out for himself. That was on the north bank of the river. But he had another lair on the south bank among the crags, and there he lurked for the most part.

Now when Bork hears this, he set off from home, and seeks Eyjolf the Gray, who then dwelt in Arnarfirth in Otterdale, and begs him to hunt for Gisli, and slay him as an outlaw, and if he slew him, he said he would give him three hundreds in silver of

the very best, and bade him leave no stone unturned to find him out. He takes the money, and gives his word to do his best. There was a man with Eyjolf named Helgi—Spy-Helgi by nickname; he was both swift of foot and sharp of eye, and he knew every inch of the firths. This man is sent to Geirthiofsfirth to find out if Gisli be there. He soon is aware of a man in hiding, but he knows not whether it be Gisli or another. So he goes back and tells Eyjolf how things stand. Eyjolf says at once it must be Gisli, and loses no time, but sets off with six men for Geirthiofsfirth; but he cannot find Gisli, and goes bootless back.

Gisli was a foresighted man and a great dreamer, and dreamt true. All wise men are of one mind that Gisli lived an outlaw longest of all men, save Grettir, the son of Osmund. Eighteen years was Grettir an outlaw. It is told that one autumn night Gisli was very restless as he slept, while he was in Auda's house, and when he wakes she asks him what he had dreamt?

"I have two women who are with me in my dreams," he answers; "one is good to me, but the other tells me naught but evil, and her tale is every day worse and worse, and she spaes me downright ruin. But what I just dreamed was this: Methought I came to a house or hall, and into that hall I went, and there I saw many of my friends and kinsfolk: they sat by fires and drank. There were seven fires; some had burnt very low, but some still burned as bright as bright could be. Then in came my better dream-wife, and said these were tokens of my life, how much of it was still to come: and she counselled me so long

as I lived to leave all old unbeliefs and witchcraft, and to be good to the deaf and the halt, and the poor and the weak. "Bear in mind," she said, "thou hast so many years yet to live as thou sawest fires alight." My dream was no longer than that. Then Gisli chaunted several staves:

"Fires seven, the bard remembers,
Lady, blazed within that hall;
Men around those glowing embers
Sate and drank like brothers all.
One and all those inmates gladly
Greeted Gisli as their guest;
Gisli hailed them soft and sadly,
Fitting words his thanks expressed.

"Thus that weird wife, wise and witty,
Spoke, and said to Norway's friend—
Soft her voice and full of pity,—
'Man! behold thy journey's end;
Mark those seven fires burning,
Seven years to thee remain;
Then, to this abode returning,
Make thee merry, free from pain.'

"'Noble man!' the voice continues,
'Shun the wizard's hateful lore;
Hero bold, of strongest sinews,
Seek the muse's golden store.
Bear in mind this precept hoary—
Naught so much defileth hearts
As wicked wit, as idle story;
Vile is witchcraft, black her arts.

"'Stay thy hand, be slow to slaughter;
Rouse not men to seek thy life:
Come! thy word to wisdom's daughter
Be not first in stirring strife.

Man of noble nature, ever
Help the weak, the halt, the blind;
Hard the hand that opens never,
Bright and blest the generous mind.'"

Now Bork presses Eyjolf hard, and thinks he has not done so much as he said he would, and that there had been small return for the silver he had given him. He said he was quite sure Gisli was in Geirthiofsfirth, and if Eyjolf did not send some one to take Gisli's life, Bork said he must come and hunt him down himself: "For 'tis a shame that two such champions and chiefs as we think ourselves cannot get Gisli put out of the way."

Eyjolf was all alive again, and sends Spy-Helgi again round Geirthiofsfirth; and now he takes food with him, and is away a week, and lies in wait to catch sight of Gisli. At last one day he sees a man come out of a hiding-place, and knows Gisli at once. As soon as he sees him he goes back and tells Eyjolf what he had seen.

Now Eyjolf sets off with eight men, and makes for Auda's house in Geirthiofsfirth; but they do not find Gisli there, and now they beat all the thickets thereabouts, and still cannot find Gisli. Then they go back to Auda's house, and Eyjolf offers her a great sum of money if she will betray Gisli; but she would do nothing of the kind. Then they threatened to maim her, but it was all no good, and they had to go back as wise as they came. This was thought a most shameful journey for them; and Eyjolf stays at home all that autumn.

But though Gisli had not been hunted down, he sees plain

enough that he must be taken, and that very soon, if he stays there. So he breaks up from home, and goes along the coast to Strand, and rides to see his brother Thorkel at "the Combe." He knocks at the door of the sleeping-house in which Thorkel is abed, and he gets up, goes out, and greets Gisli.

"I want to know, now," said Gisli, "if thou wilt yield me any help? I look to thee for comfort and countenance, for now I am hard pressed, and I have forborne to do this for a long time."

But Thorkel gave him the old answer, and said outright he would give him no help that might get himself into trouble. Silver and horses he would give him, if he needed them, or anything else, as he said before, but nothing besides.

"Now I see," said Gisli, "that thou wilt not help me. Give me now three hundred in wadmel, and make up your mind that henceforth I shall not often ask thy aid."

Thorkel does as he wishes, and gives him the woollen and some silver. Gisli said he would take what was given him, but added he would not behave so meanly were he in Thorkel's place. At their parting Gisli was very down-hearted.

Now he goes out to Vadil, to the mother of Gest, the son of Oddleif, and reaches her house before dawn, and knocks at the door. The housewife goes to the door. She was often wont to harbour outlaws, and she had an underground room. One end of it opened on the river-bank and the other below her hall. One may see the ruins of it still. Thorgerda—for that was her name—made Gisli welcome. "I am willing enough thou

shouldest stay here awhile, but I am sure I can't tell whether this is not mere old wife's talk."

Old wife's talk or not, Gisli was willing to take it as it was meant, and said he had not been so well treated by men that better things were not to be hoped for from women.

So Gisli stays there that winter, and he was never better cared for in all his outlawry than there.

As soon as ever the spring came Gisli fares back to Geirthiofsfirth, for he could not bear to be any longer away from Auda his wife, so much they loved each other. He is there that summer by stealth, and up to autumn. And now as the nights lengthen the dreams lengthen with them, and that worse dream-wife comes oftener and oftener to him, and he has hard nights. Once he says to Auda, when she asks him what he had dreamt, and his answer was in verse :

" A weary wife now haunts my slumber ;
If dreams be true, as oft they be,
Not many winters shall I number,
No tongue shall ' Graybeard !' shout to me :
This dream-wife bids me peak and pine,
Vain 'tis to try to break her spell ;
But little care I, darling mine !
I dream, but slumber soft and well."

And now he tells her that that worse dream-wife was ever coming to him, and wishing to sprinkle blood over him, and to smear and bathe him in it ; and that she looked spitefully on him. Then he chaunted :

" Still my dreams are heavy-hearted,
Still my evil genius lowers ;
All my mirth hath clean departed,
Mine no more are blithesome hours :
Sleep no sooner seals my eyelids
Than a loathly wife appears,
Bathed in blood and gore-bedabbled,
Drenching me with dew of spears." *

And again he chaunted :

" Darling wife, I now have uttered
All my mind about my dreams ;
Nothing hidden, nothing muttered,
Words of truth welled out in streams :
Wrath now riseth hour by hour,
Worse my foes shall feel my hand—
High-born chiefs, whose haughty power,
Marked me with an outlaw's brand."

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* Periphrasis for blood.

CHAPTER XIII.

GISLI GOES TO INGIALLD.

Now all is quiet, and Gisli goes again to Thorgerda, and is with her another winter. But the summer after he goes back to Geirthiofsfirth, and is there till autumn draws near. Then he goes once more to his brother Thorkel and knocks at the door, but Thorkel will not go out of doors; so Gisli takes a staff and scores runes on it, and throws it in through a slit. Thorkel sees it and takes it up and looks at it. After that he arose and went out and greeted Gisli. "What news?" he asks, but Gisli says he has no news to tell.

"Now I am come to see thee, kinsman, for the last time; and now let me have some heartier help, and I will repay thee by never asking any more at thy hand."

But Thorkel answers now as before; offers him horse or boat, but withdraws from all other help. Gisli chooses the boat, and bids Thorkel shove her down with him. He does so, and gives him six measures of food, and a hundred ells of wadmel.

And so when Gisli had got into the boat Thorkel stands on the shore. Then Gisli said:

"Now thou thinkest thou standest with all four feet in the

crib, and that thou art the friend of many great chiefs, and dreadest nothing at all. But I am an outlaw, and have the feud of many men, and know not where to lay my head; but for all that I can tell thee thou wilt be slain before I am slain. And now we must part worse friends than we ought, and never see each other again; but know this, I would not deal so by thee. Shoulder to shoulder, we would both share the same doom."

"I care not for thy ill-boding spaedom, nor how much thou braggest of thy bravery," said Thorkel; and so they parted.

Gisli rows for Hergilsisle in Broadfirth. There he takes out the tholes, and thwarts, and oars, and all that was loose in the boat, and then upsets and lets her drive with the tide in towards Ness. And now men guess who see the boat that Gisli must be drowned, since the boat is shattered and driven on shore; and they think he must have taken it from his brother Thorkel.

Now Gisli goes up to the farm in Hergilsisle. There dwells a man named Ingialld, and his wife's name was Thorgerda. Ingialld is Gisli's cousin by kinship, and had come out to Iceland with him. When they met he offered Gisli all the help and aid which he could show him, and Gisli took it gladly, and was quiet there for a time.

In Ingialld's household were a thrall and a woman slave. The man's name was Swart, and the woman's Bothilda. Ingialld had a son called Helgi, and he was an idiot, the biggest you ever saw, and utterly witless. He was so treated that a pierced stone was tied round his neck, and he grazed out of doors like a sheep, and he was called Ingialld's idiot. He was tall of growth, almost

like a giant. So Gisli is there that winter, and builds a boat for Ingialld and many other things. But all that he did was easy to ken, for he was handier than almost any other man. Men wondered and wondered how it was that everything was so well made that Ingialld had, for he was not a skilful carpenter himself. Every summer Gisli went to Geirthiofsfirth; and so things go on for three winters since he had first began to dream, and the help Ingialld gave him stood him in the greatest stead.

At last men began to lay their heads together about all this, and made up their minds after all that Gisli must be still alive, and have lived with Ingialld, and not be drowned as had been said. It strengthened what they said when they saw that Ingialld had three boats, all of them well built. So this gossip comes to the ears of Eyjolf the Gray, and it is again Spy-Helgi's lot to set off; and so he comes to Hergilsisle. Gisli is always in his earth-house whenever strangers come to the isle; but Ingialld is a good host, and offers Helgi shelter. So he stays there that night. Ingialld was a very busy man; he rowed out to sea every day that a boat would swim. So next morning, when he was ready to row away, he asks whether Helgi is not eager to be forwarded on his way, and why he lies a-bed. He says he is not quite himself, and puffs and blows, and rubs his forehead. Ingialld bade him lie there as still as he could, and goes off to sea, while Helgi groans and moans.

Now, it is said that Thorgerda goes to the earth-house and means to give Gisli his breakfast, but there was a panel between the larder and the room where Helgi lay. As soon as Thorgerda

goes out of the larder Helgi climbs up to the top of the panel and sees that there is a meal of meat dished up for some one. Just then Thorgerda comes back, and Helgi turns him round as fast as he can, and topples down from the panel. Thorgerda asks why he behaves so, and why he clambers up to the roof like a thief, and cannot be still. He said he was so mad with pain that he couldn't be still: "Be so good as to lead me to my bed." So she led him back to bed, and then she goes away with the dish of meat. But Helgi rises up straightway and follows her, and now he sees what is in the wind. Then he goes back, and lays him down again and sleeps in bed that day. Ingialld comes home at even, and goes to Helgi's bed and asks whether he were easier. He said he was on the way to be well, and begged to be put over from the isle next morning. So he is put across to Flat Isle, and thence he fares south to Thorsness, and says he has found out that Gisli is harboured by Ingialld. After that, Bork sets out from home, and there are fifteen of them in all, and they get on board a sailing boat, and sail from the south over Broadfirth. That day Ingialld had rowed out to the deep-sea fishing, and Gisli with him; but his thrall and his maid were in another boat, and they lay near some islands called Skutilisles.

Now Ingialld sees a boat sailing from the south, and said: "I see something to my mind. Yonder sails a boat, and I think in that ship must be Bork the Stout, for her sails are striped with red."

"What's to be done now?" asks Gisli. "I want to know whether thou art so deep-thoughted as thou art brave and manly."

"My plan is soon made," said Ingialld, "though I am no long-headed fellow. Let us row as hard as we can to the isle, and then go up to the top of Vadsteinberg, and stand at bay so long as we can keep our feet."

"Just as I thought," said Gisli: "I knew thou wouldst choose what would show thy bravery; but I shall be paying thee a worse meed for all thy help than I mean if for my sake thou art to lose thy life. That shall never be; we must think of something else. Thou shalt row to the island and the thrall with thee, and ye two shall climb the hill and make ready to hold your own, and then they who are sailing round the Ness from the south will think I am the second man. But I will change clothes with the thrall, as I did once before, and I will get into the boat with Bothilda."

Then Ingialld did as Gisli advised, and he showed plainly enough that he was very wroth, and when they part Bothilda asked:

"What's to be done next?" and Gisli sang a stave:

"Maiden mine, what plan to take,
Since we Ingialld must forsake;
Now my tongue bursts forth in song,
Maid in black, of muscle strong!
My heart is set to skim the seas,
To ply the oar, to hug the breeze;
But know, whatever be my doom,
I care not whensoe'er it come."

Now they row south to meet Bork and his men, and show no token of being in any strait. Then Gisli laid it down how they were to behave.

"Thou shalt say that here on board the boat is the idiot, but I will sit in the stern and mock what thou sayest, and wrap me up in the nets, and every now and then almost throw myself overboard, and behave as madly as I can, and as soon as ever they have got a little way from us I will row with all my might, and try to put as much water between us as I can."

So now she rows to meet Bork and his men, and yet gave them a wide berth, and made as though she were seeking a fishing-bank. Now Bork calls out to her and asks if Gisli were on the isle.

"I don't know," she said, "but this I know, there is a man yonder who bears away the bell from all other men on the isle both in height and handicraft."

"Say you so?" said Bork. "Is he there now?"

"He was when I left home," she says.

"Pray, is Master Ingialld at home?" asked Bork.

"He rowed back to land long since," she said, "and his thrall with him, as I thought."

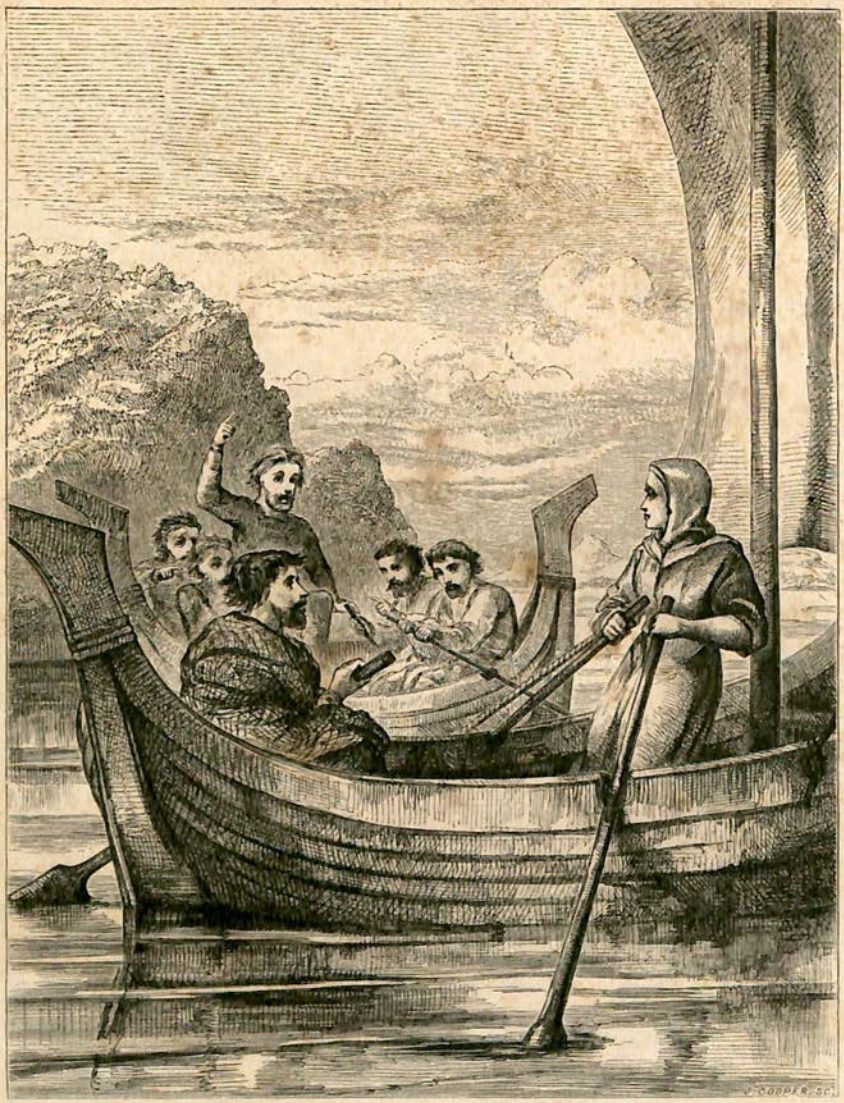
"That cannot have been," said Bork; "it must have been Gisli. Let us row after them as fast as we can."

"We think it fine fun," they answered, "to look at the idiot and all his mad pranks."

The men said she was in a sad plight when she had to lead such a fool about.

"I think so too," said she, "but I feel hurt that you laugh at him, and give me little pity."

"Have done with this stuff," said Bork. "Let us get on our course, for the prey is almost in our hands."



GISLI SLIPS THROUGH BORK'S FINGERS.

CHAPTER XIV.

GISLI SLIPS THROUGH BORK'S FINGERS.

So they parted; and Bork and his men row to the isle, and land, and see the men on the Vadsteinberg, and make thither, and think they have done a good stroke of business. But all the while it was only Ingialld and his thrall who were up there.

Bork was the first to know the men, and said to Ingialld: "The best way is to give up Gisli, or tell where he is. Thou art a hound, and nothing else, when thou hast hidden away my brother's murderer, and all the while art my tenant. 'Twere well if thou gottest some harm, and it were best that thou wert slain."

"Well," says Ingialld, "I wear work-a-day clothes, and I don't care a button if they are torn to bits. I will sooner lose my life than not do Gisli all the good in my power, and keep him out of harm's way."

Men say that Ingialld gave most help to Gisli, and was the greatest gain to him; and it is also said that when Thorgrim Bottlenose worked his spells he used the words that "naught should help Gisli, though men tried to shelter him here on land;" but he forgot to add the out isles, and so his charm was only partly fulfilled, though it was fated to be fulfilled at last.

Bork thinks it not seemly to fall on his tenant Ingialld ; so he turns away to the homestead and there seeks for Gisli, and cannot find him, as was likely. Then they roam over the isle, and come at last to a spot where the idiot lay and grazed in a hollow, with the stone tied round his neck.

Then Bork says : "Well, I always heard strange stories about Ingialld's idiot, but I never thought he could be in two places at once. There's no use hunting here, and we have been so heedless, I never knew the like, nor do I know how we shall ever set it right. Why ! that must have been Gisli in the boat alongside us, and he must have passed himself off as the idiot, for he is ready at everything, and is the biggest mockbird. 'Tis a shame to so many men if he slip through our fingers this time. Let us hasten after him, and let him not escape our clutches."

Then they jump into their boat and row after them, and ply the oars fast. They soon see that Gisli and the maid with a fair tide have got a good way across the sound, and each boat rowed smartly. But that boat goes faster through the water which has most men to pull, and they overhauled them so much that Bork and his men were just a spear's throw behind them when they got to land.

Then Gisli spoke to the maid, and said : "Now we must part, and here is a ring which thou shalt carry to Ingialld, and another to his wife, and tell them I say thou must have thy freedom, and send them these as tokens. My wish also is that Swart should be set free. Thou mayest well be called my deliverer, and I wish thee to profit by it."

Now they part. Gisli leaps on shore and into some crags. It was at Hjardarness that he landed. The maid rowed off all dripping and reeking with her hard pull. Bork and his men had no time to waste on her alone in her boat, but rowed straight to shore, and Quarrelsome Stein was first out of the boat, and runs off to seek for Gisli. But as he clomb the crags Gisli stood in his path with his sword drawn, and smote him on the head, and cleft him to the chine, and down he toppled a dead man. Bork and his men land on the isle also—for it was an island just off the mainland; but Gisli plunges into the strait and tries to swim to the main. Just then Bork hurled a spear at him, and smote him on the calf, and cut a piece out of it, and that was a great wound. Gisli gets rid of the spear, but loses his sword; for he was so weary he could not hold it. It was then dark and night. As soon as he came to land he runs into the wood, for then the land thereabouts was overgrown with trees. Now Bork and his men row to land and hunt for Gisli, and pen him up in the wood; for the wood was not deep, and he is so weary and stiff he can scarce walk a step, and is now ware of men on all sides of him. Now he takes a plan and goes down to the shore, and so comes along the water's edge in the dark to a farm called "the Howe," and there seeks a farmer named Ref (the Fox), who was the craftiest of men. Ref greets him, and asks the news. Gisli told him the whole truth, and all that had happened between him and Bork. Now Ref had a wife whose name was Elfdisa, fair of face, but the greatest shrew, and

altogether a downright scold. That was her wont with others, but she and Ref hit it off very well together.

So when he had told Ref how things stood Gisli asks him for help.

"They will be here in the twinkling of an eye," said Gisli. "Now I am hard pressed, and there are few to stand by me."

"I will only help thee," says Ref, "if I may settle how thou art to be helped. Thou shalt have no share in it."

"With all my heart," says Gisli, "for I can't stir a step farther."

"Go indoors, then," says Ref; and so they did.

Then Ref said to Elfdisa:

"I must be so free as to send a man into thy bed."

And with that he takes all the clothes off the box-bed, and says that Gisli must crouch down in the straw at the bottom. Then he heaps the clothes and bedding on him, and last of all Elfdisa lies down atop of him.

"Stay where thou art, whatever happens," says Ref. At the same time he bids Elfdisa be as cross and snappish as ever she could be.

"Don't spare, but pour out all the bad words thou knowest —curses and oaths. But I will take the lead in talking with them, and turn my words as I think best."

Next time he goes out of doors he sees men coming. They were eight of Bork's band; but Bork himself stayed at Force-water. But these were to come and seek for Gisli, and seize him if he had come thither.

So Ref stays out of doors and asks, "What tidings?"

"None but what thou must already know. Knowest thou aught of Gisli, or if he has passed this way."

"He hasn't passed by here," says Ref. "If he had tried it he would not have lived long. I don't know now why ye should think me less ready to slay Gisli than any other man; but I have just wit enough to see that the favour and friendship of such a man as Bork would be well worth winning."

"Well," they answered, "will it be against thy will if we search the house?"

"With all my heart! why not?" says Ref.; "for I know ye will hunt all the more steadily in other places if ye know of a truth that he is not here. Pray, step in, and search for him as narrowly as ye can."

So they go indoors, but when Elfdisa heard their stamping, she bawled out what band of blackguards that might be, and what pack of fools it could be that knocked men up at night. Ref begged her to keep a smooth tongue in her mouth, but she did not spare them one of her foul words, and she yelled and hooted at them, so that they might be less able to hunt. Still they searched and searched, but still less than they would otherwise have done if the Goody had not pelted them with so much slang.

After that they go away and find nothing, and bid the farmer farewell, and he wished them a safe journey home. So they go back to Bork, and are sore grieved at their journey, and think they have got both harm and shame, and after all done nothing. Now all this was noised about the countryside, and men

thought it was still the same story, and that Bork had still the same ill-luck at Gisli's hand.

Now Bork goes home and tells Eyjolf what ought to be done. Gisli stays with Ref half a month, and after that he goes away. They parted good friends, and Gisli gives him a knife and belt, and they were great treasures, though he had nothing else with him. After this Gisli goes to his wife in Geirthiofsfirth, and his fame waxed much after these deeds; and truth to say there never has been a man of readier hand or more daring heart than Gisli, but he was not a lucky man, as was proved from the very first.

CHAPTER XV.

THORKEL'S SLAYING.

Now the story goes on that next spring Bork fares to Thorskafirth Thing with a great company, and means to meet his friends there. Gest sails from the west from his house at Redsand on Bardastrand, and Thorkel Soursop comes too, each in his own ship. But just as Gest was ready to start two lads came to him ill-clad, with beggars staves in their hands. Men know this, that these two lads had a talk aside with Gest, that they beg a passage over the firth, and that he grants it. So they sail with him, and he takes them as far as Hallsteinsness. They landed just beyond the farm where Hallstein offered up his son, that a tree of sixty feet might be thrown up by the sea, and there are still to be seen the pillars of his high seat which he had made out of that tree. Thence the lads go up into Teigwood, and so go through the wood till they come to Thorskafirth Thing.

There was a man named Hallbjorn: he was a vagabond who roamed over the country, and not fewer men with him than ten or twelve. But when he came to the Thing he built himself a booth. Thither to the Beggar's Booth the lads go and ask for a

lodging, and say they are beggars and runagates. He said he will find room for every one who asks him prettily.

"Here have I been," he said, "every year for many a spring, and I know all the chiefs and priests."

The lads said they would be very glad if he would take them under his wing and teach them wisdom.

"We are very curious to see mighty folk about whom great tales are told."

So Hallbjorn says if they will go down with him to the sea-strand, that then he would know every ship as it ran in, and tell them all about it. They thanked him much for his gentleness.

Now they go down to the strand and look out at sea, and they soon see ships sailing up to the land. Then the elder lad began to ask :

"Who owns yon ship which now sails up nearest to us?"

"Gest the Wise," he answers, "of Hagi on Bardastrand."

"But who sail next, and run their ship up at the horn of the firth?"

"That is Thorkel Soursop."

They see now that Thorkel lands and sits him down while his men bore the lading from the ship as the tide rose. But Bork was busy setting up their booth ; for the two brothers-in-law had one booth between them, and they were always good friends.

Thorkel had on a Greek hat and a gray cloak. He had a gold brooch on his shoulder, and a sword in his hand. In a little while Hallbjorn and the lads went up to where Thorkel

was sitting. Now one of the lads, the elder, began to speak, and said:

"Pray who is this mighty man who sits here? Never have I seen a fairer or a nobler man."

He answered: "Thy words fall fair. My name is Thorkel."

The lad went on: "That sword which thou bearest in thy hand must be a treasure. Wilt thou let me look at it?"

"A strange fellow thou art," answers Thorkel; "but still I will let thee see it." And with that he handed him the sword.

The lad grasped the sword, drew off a step or two, snaps the peace-strings, and draws the sword.

But when Thorkel saw that he said:

"That I never gave thee leave to do. Why hast thou drawn the sword?"

"Neither did I ask thy leave," said the lad; and brandishes the sword, and smites Thorkel on the neck, and takes off his head at a stroke.

Now as soon as this happens up jumps Hallbjorn the Runagate; but the lad threw down the sword all bloody as it was, seizes his staff, and so they all ran with Hallbjorn, and all the beggars ran too, for they were almost mad with fright. So they ran by the booth which Bork was setting up.

Now men flocked round Thorkel, and no man could tell who had done the deed. Bork just then asked what was all that stir or fuss down where Thorkel sate. He said this just as the fifteen beggars tore along by his booth; and then the youngest lad, whose name was Helgi—Berg was he that did the deed—said:

"I don't know what they are mooting, but methinks they are striving whether Vestein left only daughters behind him, or whether he had ever a son."

So Hallbjorn runs to his booth, but the lads take to the wood which was nigh to the spot, and no one can find them.

Now men run to Hallbjorn's booth, and ask what it all meant; but all the beggars could say was, that two young lads had joined their band, and that they were as much taken unawares as any one else, and hardly thought they should know them again. Yet they say something of their form and feature, and of their speech and discourse, what like it had been. And now Bork thinks he knows from the words which Helgi had uttered that it must have been Vestein's sons. After that he goes to Gest and takes counsel with him as what was best to do.

"I am most bound of all men," says Bork, "to take up the feud for my brother-in-law Thorkel. Methinks 'tis not unlikely that the sons of Vestein must have done this deed, for we know no other men than they who had any quarrel with Thorkel. Now it may well be they have got clear off for this time, but I will give much to have them outlawed at this very Thing; so give us counsel how the suit is to be followed up."

"I think," says Gest, "it is no easy matter to take this suit in hand, for methinks had I done the deed I could so hamper the suit, if it were about to be brought against me, by naming another man instead of myself, that the suit would come to naught. Maybe, methinks, he that did the deed had the same thought running in his head, and so he has thrown the blame on the boys."

And Gest was against bringing the suit against them, and threw cold water on it in every way.

Men thought it sooth that Gest had been in league with the lads all along, for he was their near kinsman. Then they cease talking, and the suit falls to the ground; but Thorkel is laid in his howe, after the fashion of the olden time, and men go away home from the Thing, and nothing else happened at it.

Now Bork is very ill-pleased with his doings, and though he ought to have been used to it, still he got great dishonour and disgrace from this matter of Thorkel.

As for the lads, they fare till they get to Geirthiofsfirth and lie out ten days. They reach Auda's house, and Gisli is at that time there. It was night when they came, and they knock at the door. Auda goes to the door and greets them, and asks what news. But Gisli lay all the while in his earth-house in his bed, and she raised her voice at once if he had need to be warned. They tell her of Thorkel's slaying, and how things stood. They also say how long they had been without food.

"I will send you on," says Auda, "over the ridge into Mossdale to the sons of Bjartmar, and I will give you food and tokens that they may take you under their wing, and I do this because I dare not ask Gisli to take you in."

So the lads go away into the wood, where they cannot be found, and eat their food, for it was long since they tasted any, and then they lay them down and sleep when they are full, for they were much worn with hunger and travel.

As for Auda she goes into Gisli and says:

"Now I set great store upon knowing how thou wilt take something, and whether thou wilt honour me more than I am worth."

He caught her up at once and said: "I know thou art about to tell me the slaying of my brother Thorkel."

"So it is as thou guessest," said Auda; "the lads have come hither and wished thee to harbour them here for good and all, for they thought they could find shelter nowhere else."

"No!" he answers, "I cannot bear the sight of my brother's slayers and live under the same roof with them;" and up he jumps, and wants to draw his sword, and burst out into song:

"Why should not Gisli draw the sword?
Ha! soon shall vengeance be the word.
What! Thorkel slain, and Gisli cool?
Auda, thou tak'st me for a fool!
All o'er the Thing, with 'bated breath,
Men mourn for Thorkel done to death.
One stalwart blow before I die,
A brother's blood aloud doth cry."

But now Auda told him they had gone away; "for I had wit enough not to let them run this risk."

And Gisli said it was the best way that they never met, and then he soon softened down; and now all is quiet again.

CHAPTER XVI.

SPY-HELGI AND HAVARD.

It is said that now only two more years were left of those which the dream-wife had said he had to live. And as time goes on, and Gisli is in Geirthiofsfirth, all his dreams come back on him, and he has hard struggles in his sleep; and now the worse dream-wife comes oftener and oftener to him, though the better visits him sometimes. So it fell one night, as Gisli dreamed that the better dream-wife came to him, and she seemed to ride on a gray horse, and bids him go with her to her abode, and he went gladly. So they came to a house which was almost as large as a hall, and she leads him into that house, and he thought there were pillows of down on the benches, and that it was well furnished in everything. She bade him stay there and be happy: "Hither shalt thou fare when thou diest, and pass thy time in bliss and ease."

And now he wakes and chaunted these verses on what he had dreamt:

"Lo! the goddess shows her power,
Sets me on her palfrey gray,
Makes me ride unto her bower,
Bids me welcome every day:

All her words some comfort bringing,
Vowing ever to befriend ;
In my ears soft sounds are ringing,
Still that music knows no end.

"There was many a slumb'rous pillow,
Strewn on benches in that hall,
Soft I sate as swan on billow,
Ah ! my heart remembers all :
More—that lovely woman laid me
On a bed of softest down :
Grateful for the cheer she made me,
Straight my face forgot to frown.

"Then outspoke that bounteous woman—
'Mighty chief ! thy foeman's bane,
Hither hasten, chased by no man ;
Death shall set thee free from pain :
Then shalt thou'—her speech pursuing—
'All these treasures call thine own ;
Me, too, shalt thou win for wooing ;
Happy we as birds new flown.'"

Now it is next to be said that Helgi the Spy was sent again round Geirthiofsfirth, and men deem it likely that Gisli is there. A man went with him whose name was Havard. He had come to Iceland from Norway the summer before, and was a kinsman of Gest the Wise. They gave out that they were sent into the wood to hew fuel for household use, but though this was the cloak of their journey, hidden under it was the design to hunt out Gisli, and see if they could find out his lurking-place. After they had been three nights in the wood spying about, on the last evening they see a fire burning in the cliffs and crags south of the river. That was just after sundown, and it was as dark as

pitch. Then Havard asks Helgi what was to be done, "for thou must be more wont to these things than I can be."

"There is but one thing to be done," said Helgi, "and that is, to pile up a beacon on this hillock which we stand on, and then we shall find it when it is broad daylight, and then we shall see across from the beacon to the cliffs: 'tis but a short way to see."

So they take that plan, and when they had piled up the beacon Havard said he was worn out, and so tired he could scarce keep his eyes open. So he lay down to sleep. But Helgi keeps awake, and heaps up what yet failed to the beacon; and when he had ended his work Havard wakes, and bids Helgi go to sleep and he would watch. So Helgi sleeps awhile, and while he sleeps Havard sets to work and carries off the whole beacon, so that he did not leave one stone upon another in the dark. When he had done that, he takes up a huge stone and dashes it down on the rock close to Helgi's head, so that the earth shook again. Then Helgi jumps up, and is all of a quake and faint-hearted, and asks what ever is the matter.

"Well," said Havard, "there's a man in the wood, and very many such keepsakes have come hither during the night."

"That must have been Gisli. He must have found us out; and know, good fellow, we shall have every bone in our bodies broken if such grit falls on us. There is naught to be done but to be off as fast as possible."

Now Helgi runs off as fast as he can, but Havard follows him, and bids Helgi not to run away from him. But Helgi gave little heed, and ran as fast as he could lay legs to the ground.

At last they came to their boat, and jumped in, and dash the oars into the sea, and row like mad, and do not stay their course till they get to Otterdale, and then Helgi says he has found out where Gisli had hidden himself.

Eyjolf was up and stirring in a trice, and sets off at once with thirteen men, and both Helgi and Havard go with him. So they fare till they come to Geirthiofsfirth, and go through all the woods to search for the beacon and Gisli's lair, and found them nowhere.

Now Eyjolf asks Havard whereabouts they had piled up the beacon.

"I'm sure I can't tell," he answers; "I was so dead tired that I can't call to mind anything. Besides, Helgi piled up the beacon while I slept. Methinks 'tis not unlikely that Gisli was ware of us, and has carried away the beacon when it got light, and we had gone away."

Then Eyjolf said: "Everything seems doomed to go against us in this quest. We may as well turn back;" and so they did; but before they went Eyjolf says he wishes to go and see Auda.

Now they come to the house, and go indoors, and Eyjolf sate him down to talk with Auda. And this was how he began:

"I will make a bargain with thee, Auda. Thou shalt tell me where Gisli is, and I will give thee three hundreds in silver; those very pieces which I have taken as the price of his head. Thou shalt not be bound to stand by while we take his life. Besides all this, I will get thee a match which shall be far better in every way than this hath been. Thou must look

also to this—how cheerless it is to be in this barren firth, and be cut off for ever from thy kinsmen and belongings, all because of Gisli's misdeeds."

"As for that," she says, "methinks it most unlikely we should ever agree upon a match which I should think as much worth as this; but still the old saw says: 'Fee is best for a 'fey' man.' Let me see then whether this fee is so much and fine as thou sayest."

So he pours out the silver into her lap, and she touches it with her hand, while he tells it over and presses her hard. Then her foster-daughter, Gudrida, fell a-weeping, and goes out and meets Gisli, and says:

"My foster-mother has now lost her wits, and will betray thee."

"Be of good heart," says Gisli; "that will never be. My brave Auda will never betray me."

With that he chaunted:

"What! the folk, with wicked whisper,
Say that she will me deceive?
Auda faithless to her husband
Never can my heart believe.
No! her heart is staunch as ever;
Auda plots no guile for me;
Auda wrongs her Gisli never;
Vain the bribe of silver fee."

After that the lassie went home, and says never a word as to where she had been. By this time Eyjolf had told the silver, and then Auda said:

"This fee is no whit better or worse than thou hast said; and now thou wilt no doubt let me do with it as I like."

Eyjolf jumped at that, and bade her do with it just as she chose.

So Auda takes the fee, and puts it into a big purse. After that she rises and runs to Eyjolf, and dashes the purse, silver and all, on Eyjolf's nose, so that the blood gushed out all over him; and as she smote him she said:

"Take that for thy silliness, and bad luck go with it! Didst thou ween I would sell my husband into the hands of such a wretch as thee. Take that, I say, and shame and blame go with it. Thou shalt bear in mind, vile fellow, so long as thou livest, that a woman hath beaten thee, and know thou shalt never work thy will whatever happens."

"Lay hands on," called out Eyjolf, "and slay her, though she be but a weak woman."

Then Havard spoke out and said: "Our journey is about as bad as it can be already without our doing this dastard's deed. Up men, and do not let him work his will."

"Sooth is the saw," said Eyjolf, "'There are no foes like those of one's own house.'"

But Havard had many friends, and many a man was ready to stand by him in this matter, and at the same time to save Eyjolf from disgrace; so he had to swallow his shame, and goes away home. But ere Havard leaves the house Auda said: "The debt that Gisli owes thee must not be long unpaid. Here is a ring which I wish thee to take."

"I would not have looked for this," says Havard.

"But for all that I will repay thee," says Auda. So she gave him the gold down on the nail for his help. So Havard takes horse and fares south to the Strand to Gest the Wise, for he will stay no longer with Eyjolf. As for Eyjolf, he fares home to Otterdale, and is ill-pleased with his journey; and this last seemed to men the most shameful of all.

CHAPTER XVII.

GISLI'S EVIL DREAMS.

So now that summer glides by, and Gisli abides in his earth-house, and is wary of himself, and does not mean to go away any more. For he thinks that the earths are stopped all round about him, and now the years of his dreaming are all spent. It chanced one night that summer that Gisli suffered much in his sleep. But when he wakes up Auda asks what he had dreamt. He says that worse dream-wife had come to him again and said thus—

"Now will I utterly crush all that the better dream-wife hath said to thee; and if I may have my way, none of those things that she hath spoken shall be of any good to thee."

Then Gisli chaunted:

"Spoke the Valkyr, stern beholding—
'Ne'er shall ye twain woo and kiss,
Day by day your love unfolding,
All the gods forbid your bliss.
Woden, lord of worlds and ages,
Me hath sent to speak his will,
Far from where the battle rages,
Lo! his bidding I fulfil.'

"Again I dreamed," says Gisli, "that yon wife came to me, and bound round my brow a bloody hood, and washed my head first in blood, and poured blood over me, so that I was all over gore." And he chaunted a song :

"She, methought, her face all flushing,
Bathed my locks in reddest blood,
Flames of light* so rosy blushing,
Woden's balm* so bright and good
Still I see her fingers glowing,
Bright with gems and blazing rings,
Steeped in blood so freely flowing,
Welling from the wounds of kings.

Again Gisli chaunted :

"Yes! that lady, dark as raven,
Bound my brow with gory hood ;
All my hair was shorn and shaven—
Sad the plight in which I stood :
Still her hands were gore-bedabbled,
Still her fingers dropped with blood ;
Something in my ear she babbled,
Then I woke—to find thee good."

At last Gisli was so sore pressed with dreams that he grew quite afraid to be alone in the dark, and could not bear to be left by himself, for as soon as ever he shut his eyes the same wife appeared to him. One night it happened that Gisli struggled just a little in his sleep, and Auda asked what had happened.

"I dreamt," says Gisli, "that men came on us, and Eyjolf

* Periphrasis for blood.

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was along with them and many others beside, and we met, and I knew that there was merry work between us. One of their band came first, grinning and gaping, and methought I cut him asunder in the middle; and methought too he bore a wolf's head. Then many more fell on me, and methought I had my shield in my hand, and held my own a long while."

Then Gisli chaunted:

"Methought that early on a morning
My foes within my dwelling stood;
Alone I met them, cravens scorning,
Alone I carved the ravens' food.
Fast and thick they fell around me—
Woe is me! I was aware,
Though chains of death not yet had bound me,
My blood bedewed thy bosom fair.

And again he chaunted:

"Well my trusty shield stood by me,
Bold my heart with peril played;
Not a man of them came nigh me,
Blithely sang my tuneful blade:
Till at last my doom was spoken,
Ten to one beat down my shield;
Well my death was then ywroken,
Loud clashed swords on fated field.

And again he chaunted:

"Thick I spread the ravens' table,
One I swept like wind away,
Ere those bitter foes were able
Once to wound me in the fray:

Nay! my sword with temper eager
Shore a leg from off a wight;
Off he limped, so wan and meagre,
Mine the pledge he lost in fight."

Now the autumn comes on and the dreams do not minish, but they rather go on waxing more and more. One night when Gisli struggled in his sleep Auda asked, as was her wont, what had happened. Gisli chaunted these verses:

"Methought, O wife, the blood was flowing
Down my sides in crimson rill;
'Tis but the debt of suffering owing,
The toilsome task I must fulfil.
Fairly won my wounds, no snarling,
Others' wives for me must weep;—
Such my visions, Auda darling,
When my eyelids close in sleep.

"Methought, O wife, with weapons bloody
Both my close-set lips were scored;
Those twin-sisters fair and ruddy
Deeper blushed at kiss of sword.
Still fond hope was ever smiling,
Blooming like the fairest flower;
'Thou shalt 'scape'—such words beguiling
Cheered me in that darksome hour.

"Methought my foemen, axes wielding,
Both my arms at once lopped off;
Wound on wound, no buckler shielding,
Woe on woe, and bitter scoff.
Worse I dreamt—my forehead splitting,
Cleft in twain by force of hand,
O'er my brow, like goblin flitting,
Gaped and grinned the grisly brand.

"Methought that lady wise and witty,
Wearing crown of silver sheen;
O'er me bowed her head in pity,
Fast the pearls fell from her een.
Mistress she of hoards unbroken,
Bound my wounds with gentle skill;
What, my love, doth this betoken?—
Bodes it good or bodes it ill?".

GISLI, AUDA, AND GUDRIDA.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GISLI'S SLAYING.

Now Gisli had stayed at home all that summer, and all had been quiet. At length the very last night of summer came. Then we are told Gisli could not sleep, nor could any of these three, Gisli, Auda, or Gudrida, sleep. The weather was in that wise that it was very still, and much rime-frost had fallen. Then Gisli says he will up and away from his house to his lurking-place south under the crags, and see if he can get rest there.

So they all three set out, and are clad in long loose kirtles, and the skirts of the kirtles swept the grass and left a track in the dew and rime. Gisli had a staff in his hand, and scored it with runes as he went, and the chips fell down. So they came to the lurking-place. He lays him down and tries to sleep, but the two women watched.

Then slumber steals over him, and he dreams that fowl came into the house called night-hawks: they are larger than ptarmigan, and they looked evil, and had been wallowing in gore and blood. Then Auda asked what he had dreamt.

"Still my dreams were not good," said Gisli, and chaunted a song:

"Wife! what time I rose and hasted,
Forth I wandered on the hills;
O'er these regions wild and wasted
Streams of song I poured in rills.
Then I heard the night-hawk shrieking,
Then I heard his mournful strain;
Soon the dew of Woden* reeking
Shall this outlaw shed like rain."

And when this had happened they hear the voices of men, and there is Eyjolf come and fourteen men with him. They had already gone to the house, and see the trail in the dew, which pointed them out. But when they were ware of those men they clomb the crags hard by, where there was good vantage-ground, and each of the women had in her hand a great club. Now Eyjolf and his men try to come up to them from below, and he called out to Gisli:

"Thy best plan is not to fare farther away, and not to let thyself be hunted down like hare-hearted men, for thou art called a brave fellow. We have often met before, and we now wish this to be the last time."

"Come on like men," answered Gisli, "for I am not going to fare farther away. Besides it is thy bounden duty to be the first to fall on me, for thou hast greater ground for quarrel with me than these others who come along with thee?"

"I'm not going," says Eyjolf, "to leave it in your hands to place my men, but I will draw them up as I choose."

* Periphrasis for blood.

"Well!" says Gisli, "it was likeliest that such a hound as thou would not dare to cross swords with me."

Then Eyjolf said to Spy-Helgi:

"'Twould be great fame for thee now wert thou to be first in leading the way up the crags to Gisli. Such a deed of derring-do would long be borne in mind."

"I have often proved," says Helgi, "that thou likest to have others before thee when there is any trial of courage; but now since thou eggest me on so hotly, well I will do my best, but mind thou backest me like a man, and keep as close to me as thou canst if thou art not altogether a milksop."

Now Helgi busks him to the work where he saw the likeliest place, and holds in his hand a big axe. Gisli was armed thus: he had in his hand his axe, and he was girt with a sword, and his shield was at his side. He had on a gray cloak, and had bound it round with a rope.

Now Helgi takes a run and rushes up the crags at Gisli. He hurried to meet him, and brandished his sword, and smote him on the loins, and cut him in two at the waist; and each half of the man fell down from the crags, each on its own side. Eyjolf got up in another place, and there Auda met him, and smites him on the arm with her club so that it lost all strength, and down he topples back again. Then Gisli spoke and said:

"Long ago I knew I was well wedded, though I never knew I was so well wedded as I am. But now thou hast yielded me less help than thou thoughtest, though thy meaning

was good, for had I got at him they would both have gone the same path."

Then two men go to hold Auda and Gudrida, and think they have quite enough to do. And now twelve men rush at once on Gisli, and try to get up the crags. But he defends himself both with stones and weapons, so that great glory followed his deeds. And now one of Eyjolf's band runs up and calls out to Gisli :

"Lay down thy good arms that thou bearest, and give up at the same time Auda thy wife."

"Come and take them then like a man," answers Gisli, "for neither the arms I bear nor the wife I love are fit for any one else."

That man thrusts at Gisli with a spear, but Gisli smote off the spear-head from the shaft with his axe, and the blow was so stout that the axe passed on to the rock, and one horn of the edge broke off. Then he throws away the axe and clutches his sword and fights with it, and shields himself with his shield. They attack him bravely, but he kept them off like a man, and now they are hard upon each other.

In that bout Gisli slew two men, and now four in all have fallen.

Still Eyjolf bade them fall on like men.

"We are getting the worst of it, but that would be worth little thought if we could only make a good end of our business."

Just then, when they were least aware, Gisli whisked about and leaps up on a crag that stands alone there, and is called Oneman's Crag. So he got away from the cliffs, and then he

turned at bay and fought. This took them quite by surprise, and now they think that affairs are in a worse way than ever—four men dead and all the rest weary and wounded.

And now there is a break in the onslaught. When they had taken breath Eyjolf eggs on his men warmly, and gives his word to get them many fair things, if they will only get at Gisli. It must be owned that Eyjolf had with him picked men both in valour and hardihood.

It was a man named Sweyn who first was ready to attack Gisli, but Gisli smites at him and cleaves him to the chine, and hurls him down from the crag. And now they think they can never tell when this man's man-slayings will stop. Then Gisli called out to Eyjolf:

"I wish to make those three hundreds in silver which thou hast taken as the price of my head as dear-bought as I can. And I rather think thou wouldst give other three hundreds in silver that we had never met, for thou wilt only take disgrace in return for your loss of life."

Now they take counsel, and no one is willing to turn back for his life's sake. So they fall on him from two sides, and two men are foremost in following Eyjolf whose names are Thorir and Thord, kinsmen of Eyjolf. They were very great swordsmen, and their onslaught was both hard and hot; and now they gave him some wounds with spear-thrusts, but he still fought on with great stoutness and bravery; and they got such knocks from him, both with stones and strokes, that there was not one of them without a wound who came nigh him, for Gisli was not a man

to miss his mark. Now Eyjolf and his kinsmen press on hard, for they felt that their fame and honour lay on it. Then they thrust at him with spears, so that his entrails fall out; but he swept up the entrails with his shirt and bound the rope round the wound.

Then Gisli called out and said they had better wait a while: "Ye will soon have the end for which ye long." Then he chaunted:

"Wife so fair, so never failing,
So truly loved, so sorely cross'd,
Thou wilt often miss me wailing,
Thou wilt weep thy hero lost.
But my soul is stout as ever;
Swords may bite, I feel no smart:
Father! better heirloom never
Owned thy son than hardy heart."

That was Gisli's last song, and as soon as ever he had sung it he rushes down from the crag and smites Thord, Eyjolf's kinsman, on the head, and cleaves him down to the belt, but Gisli fell down on his body and breathed his last.

But they were all much wounded, Eyjolf's companions. Gisli there lost his life with so many great and sore wounds that it was a wonder to see. They say that he never turned his heel, and none of them saw that his strokes were lighter, the last than the first. There now ends Gisli's life, and it has always been said he was the greatest champion—though he was not lucky in all things.

Now they drag him down to the flat ground, and take away

his sword, and bury him there in the gravel, and so go down to the sea. There on the sea-shore the sixth man breathed his last. Eyjolf offered Auda to take her with him, but she would not. After that Eyjolf fares home to Otterdale, and there, that same night, the seventh man breathes his last. An eighth lies bedridden from wounds twelve months, and then dies. As for the rest, they were healed, and got nothing but shame for their pains.

It has been said, in short, by one and all that there never was a more famous defence made by one man in times of which the truth is known.

CHAPTER XIX.

THORDISA'S WELCOME TO EYJOLF.

Now Eyjolf fares from home with eleven men to see Bork the Stout, and then he told him these tidings and the whole story.

Bork was merry at that, and bade Thordisa make Eyjolf welcome.

"Bear in mind now all thy old love for my brother Thorgrim, and be good to Eyjolf."

"I will weep for my brother Gisli," says Thordisa; "but will it not be welcome enough for Gisli's baneman if I make him some brose and serve it up?"

And that evening when she brought in the food she let fall the tray of spoons. Now Eyjolf had laid the sword that Gisli had borne between the table and his legs. Thordisa knows the sword, and as she stoops after the spoons she caught hold of the sword by the hilt and makes a stab at Eyjolf, and wished to run him through the middle, but she did not reckon that the hilt pointed up and caught the table; so she thrust lower than she would, and hit him on the thigh, and gave him a great wound.

Bork seizes Thordisa, and twists the sword out of her hand. All jump up and push away the board with the meat on it. Bork offered to let Eyjolf make his own award, and he laid it at the

full price of a man, and said he would have laid it higher had not Bork behaved so well.

As for Thordisa, she took witness at once, and says she will be parted from Bork, for she will never come into his bed again; and she kept her word. After that she went and dwelt at Thordisastead, out on the Ere. But Bork stays behind at Helgafell till Snorro the Priest turned him out; and then Bork went to dwell at Glasswaterwood.

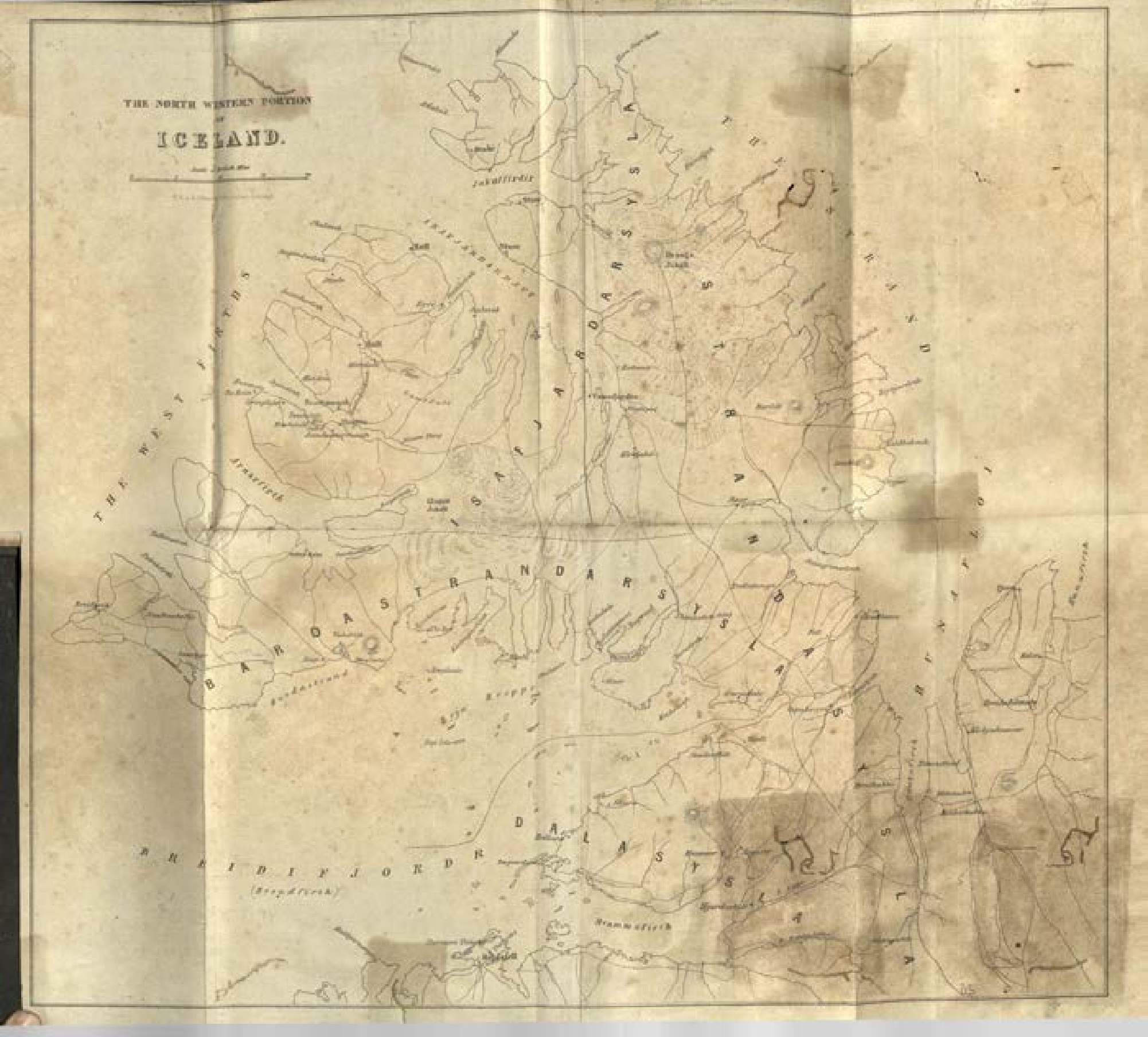
As for Eyjolf, he goes back home, and is ill-pleased with all he has done.

The sons of Vestein fare to Gest their kinsman, and call on him to send them, at his cost, abroad with their mother Gunnhillda, and Auda, Gisli's wife, and Gudrida, the daughter of Ingialld, and Geirmund, her brother. So they all sail for Norway from Whitewater in Borgarfirth. It was Gest who sent them away at his cost. They had a short passage, and came safe to Norway. There Berg walks along the street, and is looking out to hire them booth-room in the town. Two men were with him, and they meet two other men—one was clad in scarlet, and was a tall young man, and he asked Berg for his name. Berg told him at once the truth of himself and his kindred; for he thought it rather likely that he should gain good for his father than smart for him, for Vestein had made many friends on his voyages. But that man clad in scarlet drew his sword straightway and dealt Berg his death-blow. That man was Ari the Soursop, the brother of Gisli and Thorkel. Berg's companions go to the ship, and tell what had happened. The captain got them all

out of the way, and Helgi took ship for Greenland. He got thither and throve, and was thought a brave fellow. Men were sent out to take his life, but it was not doomed that he should die so. Helgi was drowned out fishing, and that was thought great scathe. Auda and Gunnhillda go to Denmark to Heathby. There they changed their faith, and went south to Rome, and did not come back. Geirmund stayed in Norway and married, and was well to do. His sister Gudrida was given away to a man, and she was thought a wise woman, and many men have come from her. Ari the Soursop sailed to Iceland, and landed in Whitewater, and sold his ship, and bought him land at Hammer; and there he dwelt some winters. Later on he lived on the Moors, and men have come from him too.

Here we end the Saga of GISLI THE SOURSOP.

God grant us all good days without end. Amen.


THE NORTH WESTERN PORTION
OF
ICELAND.
THE WEST FJORDS
STRANDARSYSLA
BARDASTRANDARSYSLA
BREIDIFJORDR
DALASYSLA
HUNAVATNSSYSLA
SKAGAFJARDARSYSLA

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